RECREATION FORMS AND TEENAGERS IN THE CITY: A SEARCH FOR NEW COMPATIBILITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

The design of urban public open spaces demands a new diversity of ideas about workable recreation activities for teenagers living in city places. This thesis examines emerging forms of recreation and the levels of quality at which standardized sports get played. A design strategy is shaped by the combination of two things: first, a way to look at recreation which isolates the settings in which activity takes place, and second, methods to adapt common game forms or to make surrounding conditions more receptive to recreational activities. Examination of the recreation opportunities and the teenage patterns of recreation in Jamaica Plain, Boston, provide the basis for a set of possible design changes. The approach and strategy set out is further illustrated by consideration of changes in a number of familiar, but ill fitting, recreation forms.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pushing out into the new is difficult. I would like to acknowledge the many places from which I received assistance in the task of making this first, small step. First, thanks go to my advisor, Terry Schnadelbach, and to John Zeisel and Gary Hack for their questioning and encouragement which helped move my efforts through many cycles of improvement. Second, this work owes much of its outlook and content to my entire experience at M.I.T. and to the many fine men with whom I have worked. Third, my parents and family expressed in many rich and wonderful ways a special, unceasing support during this work and helped keep my goals in proper perspective. Fourth, the people involved in Jamaica Plain recreation programs gave without return much time and interest when I spoke with them.

Finally, this would have been a different piece of work without the openness and friendliness of the kids out in the streets of J.P. I saw them where they were and felt the precious enthusiasm they bring to the struggle of playing in the city. Even with momentary participation in their lives, I know now who and what I shall work for.

INTRODUCTION

The Jamaica Plain - Forest Hills bantam division of the Youth Hockey League meets the North End team for a 10:30 P.M. game at the Boston University Arena. Officials conduct the game under the proper rules of hockey in this regulation-size ice rink, home of the nationally competitive B.U. hockey team and maintained by a full-time rink staff. The 2000-seat gallery holds the few dozen parents

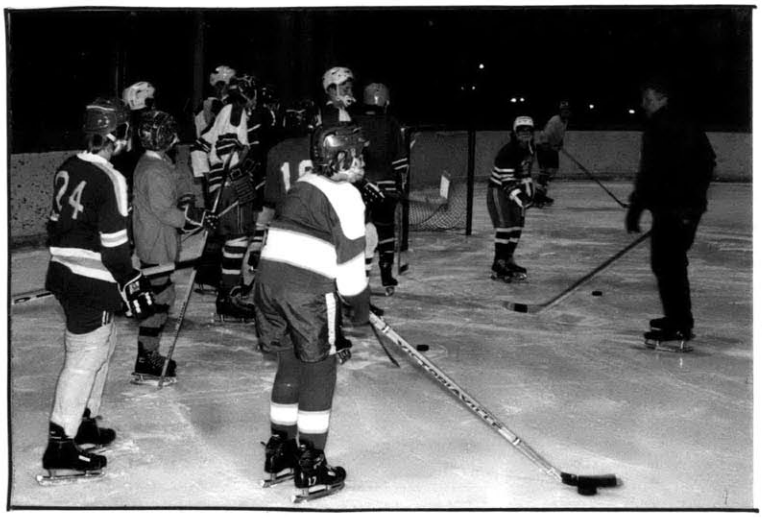
Boys from Jamaica Plain and Forest Hills in Youth Hockey League Competition at Boston University Arena.

1

who support their children's participation, both in bringing them across town to the arena and in paying for the necessary equipment which protects them from the way they play the game--helmet, mouth guard, gloves, shoulder pads, elbow pads, shin pads, padded pants--which can cost well

over $100. The volunteer coaches have selected the twenty kids present as the first team for the week; another twenty-five players do not compete in a league game but get a second hour of practice at the Jamaica Plain public rink. For a seasonal fee of twenty dollars, about ninety boys aged twelve to fifteen participate in the two teams. Additional subsidy comes from community sponsors and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department.

Just after the Youth Hockey League team finishes its Monday evening hour of practice at the Jamaica Plain rink, a rag-tag assortment of about fifteen boys rush onto the ice for an hour of hockey. Frank Sennett serves as coach for the first half-hour and as referee for a pick-up



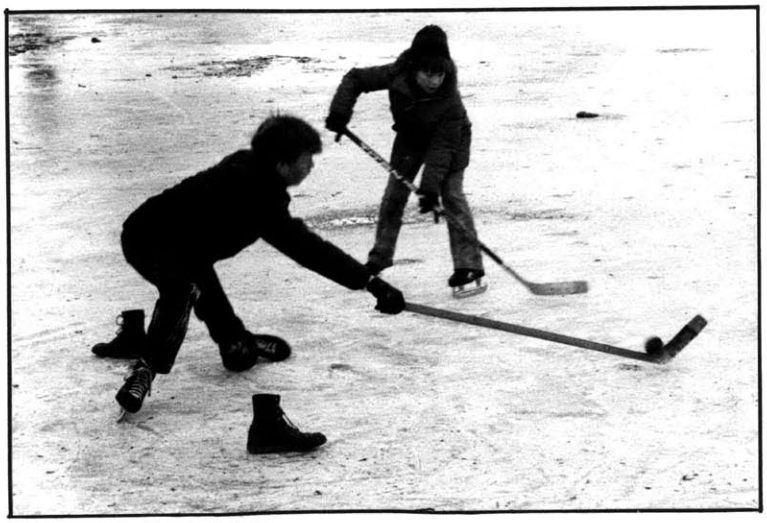
Hockey instruction and informal play at the M.D.C. rink in Jamaica Plain.

2

game after he has divided the good shooters and the bad, the young and the older, into two fairly equal teams. The boys usually each pay two dollars toward the thirty-dollar charge for an hour of ice-time although often boys come to

practice without the money; Sennett and an assistant later will solicit contributions from the neighborhood to make up the difference. The Metropolitan District Commission rink is full size although it is not enclosed and has chain-link fencing instead of glass panels around the ends. The players show a similar compromise of quality in their hand-me-down equipment and shirts from a colorful variety of sources. The season of weekly practice and intra-squad games for these boys is the season of the rink, and that depends on the cooling equipment's ability to keep an ice surface and on the M.D.C. budget.

But supervised hockey is not the only kind of hockey being played. On a small frozen pond four boys play a less formal type of hockey. There are no boundaries to



Four-player hockey on a small frozen pond. The play area is defined only by a pair of shoes which mark the goal "net."

3

the ice playing surface; a pair of shoes signify the goal area. One player on each two-man team shifts back to goalie position although he has no special protective

equipment to guard against flying pucks or slashing sticks. Some unwritten rules must govern body-checking and how hard they can shoot because there are fewer speeding slap-shots and less ferocity in this game. The game is competitive, but score is not being kept; the game goes on without a time limit and occasionally the four friends rest and then switch places to make a fairer game.

In a final degradation of the game, the ice surface disappears and hockey around Boston gets played on the

Hockey on asphalt, Jamaica Plain.

4

available asphalt of side streets, schoolyards, and other pavements. Skates and pucks are absent; the new boundaries are curbs and parked cars; the uniforms are street clothes; the gallery, passersby.

In these four places teenage boys are engaged in very different kinds of hockey. Yet the boys are the same age and from the same neighborhood, and they share the common desire to play hockey as well as do their heroes on

the Boston Bruins professional team. These forms, and probably other variations also, will be found near each other in city areas, but there are contradictions apparent in the coexistence of multiple forms of one game. These contradictions have something to tell about the form of recreation in the city.

First, there is contradiction within the purpose brought to the game by players and sponsors. The objective probably shared by the sponsors of hockey programs is to provide the best athletic activity for teenagers interested in it. In one direction this purpose could be to enable talented youth to attain a high level of skill leading to collegiate or professional competition; in another direction the purpose could be to reach the largest number of people and allow them to participate regardless of their skill or ability to pay the expense of participation. We must investigate the form of city recreation in order to resolve its most appropriate purpose and define areas where the forms in existence are not meeting that purpose.

Second, there is contradiction within the form of recreation and its legitimacy. Hockey, like most sports, has a characteristic set of rules and requirements, but in the last three examples participants have removed some requirements: the full-size artificial rink, the size of the team, the need for officiating. Which of these forms is proper--which level of quality will we support with public money?

Third, there is contradiction within the ways we speak about recreation activities. In describing four types of hockey I reported a jumbled maze of different details. However, if we look across the four illustrations it is possible to perceive similarities in the form and procedures of activities. We must sort out what goes into the types of recreation with which we think we are familiar. We must build our understanding into a general approach before we can deal with new or changing forms.

City recreation programs usually deal with only a handful of traditional sports. Baseball, basketball, hockey, tennis, swimming, and football are the usual choices. Planning focuses on the provision of facilities and programs of organization and competition in those sports. Since the planners are completely familiar with the forms and requirements of those popular activities, they need only estimate population sizes and "need," consult maps for available land, and then budget their dollars to pay for the construction and operating expenses of play fields, field houses, swimming pools, or ice rinks.

There are several results of providing support for a limited number of activities. First, to support the playing of a game like hockey, metropolitan Boston can only afford about thirty artificial rinks, so they must be dispersed where there is sufficient, available space. Second, forms of administration, supervision, instruction, and competition become as standardized as the sports. Finally, no one even contemplates an adjustment of standardized

facilities or programs to fit the communities in which they are placed. By setting out one acceptable standard of physical facility, current recreation planning does not bring together with the characteristics of the resident population either the form of the facility, its location, or its management. We do not make explicit what the behavioral requirements of those places will be nor do we test them against actual conditions.

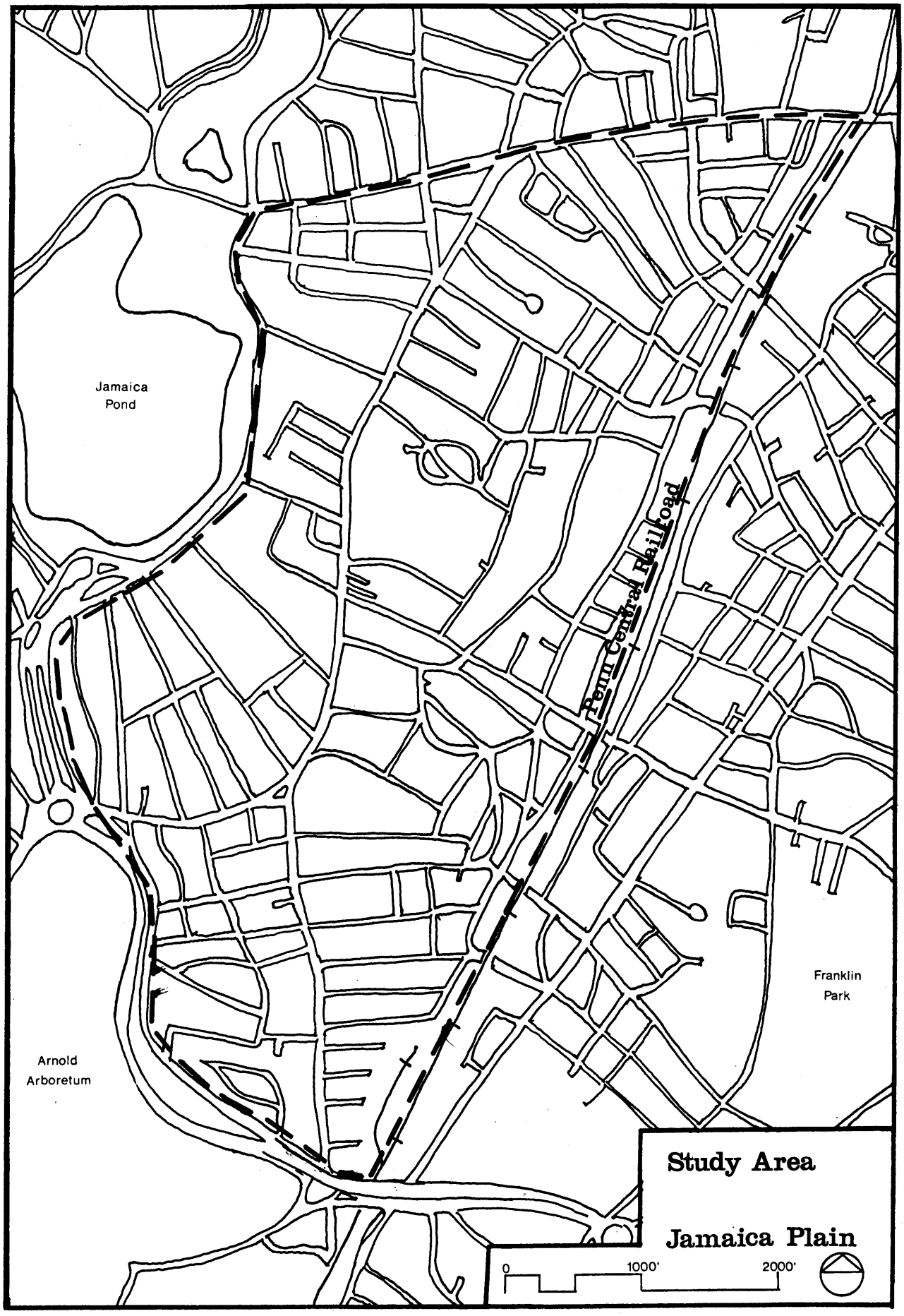
My personal experience is a primary influence on my outlook on recreation and current planning procedures. I grew up playing those conventional sports of football and softball informally in a small yard even though it was ringed by a picture window, a busy road, and a row of prickly pine trees (side-line runs were murder). With parental support I learned swimming, tennis, golf, bicycling. Then in college I discovered rowing and as a beginner among equals I broke away from my mediocrity in other sports. From a position in a last-place freshman boat I trained intensely and progressed in personal skill to row in the first varsity boat for the next three years. This included several surprise wins, European competition, and in my final race as a senior, the winning of a silver medal in the national collegiate championships.

Livng in the city myself now, I think things could be better for myself, just to maintain personal fitness. However, I also want to make city environments where kids can grow up to use active recreation and receive from it

everything I have received: physical development and recognized achievement, but also the less measurable gains in strength of character, self-reliance, and simply the enjoyment of the moment of action. Such personal benefits are not necessarily tied to competitiveness or winning. For me, moments of personal fulfillment come in the elegant exhaustion of a rowing shell moving silently, powerfully across the water by my efforts; in vacant lots or noisy streets, city kids can gain similar benefits of accomplishment, personal betterment, and the richness of full, busy lives. Game forms can serve as vehicles in that personal process of development.

My enthusiasm for supplementing the recreation opportunities of people in the city is tempered, however, by an economic responsibility. Recreation expenses must be put in perspective in regard to the many other needs of lower income, inner city people. We must budget our resources and stretch our dollars to give city areas what they most desperately need.

The writings which form the "literature" of recreation have not helped me much in my search for a better fit between our planning ideas and the needs of city kids. I discovered much more about recreation and about who those kids are while I was out in the streets during research and documentation of outdoor activities. The portion of Jamaica Plain, Boston, which I studied in particular detail is outlined in the following map and will be described in greater


Jamaica
Pond
Penn Central Railroad
Franklin
Park
Arnold
Arboretum
Study Area
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'

detail in Part Two. I do not display information about recreation in that area as proof of my thinking but as evidence, sketchy and incomplete but connected to real people and real problems.

During the early parts of my thesis work I sought out all the recreation programs and facilities in Jamaica Plain. Less easy was the search for the kids from twelve to twenty years of age and the actual ways they were choosing to spend their spare time. My difficulties in research reflect the severe separation between existing programs of recreation and the people they should serve, even when we are trying to bridge that gap. However, I think I gained some insight into conditions and problems which is helping me understand how to deal with traditional forms of recreation and, where necessary, how to break the intransigence of those forms.

Before I could move to change activity forms to fit better into the context of the city, I had to frame an approach to those activities which would retain, during examination of individual activities, the critically important connections among the people to be served, the physical form of recreation places, and the forms of responsibility and control over activities and facilities.

The first half of this paper presents the combination of two things: a way to look at recreation, and design processes by which we can develop new ideas about familiar activities and familiar city places. Part Two

gives a description of the Jamaica Plain area as the conditions of that place provide a basis for a series of recommended changes both to activity forms and to the dimensions of the city environment which support them. Behind all my writing is the goal of coming to a place in recreation planning where we can understand at a very human level (1) teenage needs for recreation, (2) the characteristics of cities and structured recreation activities which hamper the fulfillment of those needs, and (3) the means by which city recreation planners and designers can respond to unworkable situations on behalf of the people of the city.

PART ONE

FRAMING AN APPROACH: THE NECESSARY COMBINATION OF ANALYSIS AND INTERVENTION

I. The Recreation Setting as Analytical Tool

1. Examining People and Places Together

In seeking to understand a single recreation activity like hockey or at a larger scale all the recreation occurring in a city area, we see several parts within an activity. First, there are the people engaged in the activity as part of their total life activity. This can be viewed as an admittedly changing stream of behavior through time: a person will exhibit behaviors which respond to the conditions in different places--school, home, among a group of peers. Second, in recreation there are common city places where people choose to recreate or which have been set aside for sports or leisure use. Third, there are frequently recreation programs organized to supervise facilities and conduct training and competition for the people who choose to recreate.

In many cases we have constructed analyses which isolate and study one of these parts of recreation. To understand individual behavior and group interaction we use

the psychological and sociological disciplines to analyze individual actions, role relations and organizations of people. But in active outdoor recreation isolated behavioral studies are not adequate because the behaviors are place-connected: that is, recreation activity occurs within particular physical areas, the forms of which influence the form of behavior. Similarly, places for recreation are not behavior-free. We cannot design them as we would a power plant or a factory site where human activity is minimal and fluctuations in personal behaviors are not likely.

The connection between place and behavior, as psychologist Roger Barker points out,[1] is not easy to describe. Place and behavior continue to operate at different levels, for the physical place responds to understandable physical laws, but behaviors are in no way so predictable. The problem comes in trying to handle all the parts of recreation at once for study. We can manage many physical places together because they do not move on the map and we can predict their form when we design. But behavior in the aggregate is in no way similarly understandable, nor does it break into pieces which correspond to the park parcels on a map.

At the other end of the scale from an overview approach, in order to gain detailed knowledge about a recreation activity like baseball, we might take a telescope

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[1] Roger Barker, "On the Nature of the Environment," Journal of Social Issues, XIX, No. 4 (1963).

and "zoom in" on the first baseman in a game. Blotting out all other activity from our view we could meticulously record his every action and movement, and such observation would probably give us great insight into his gum-chewing habits and attentiveness. But such a complete focus on one person gives us no knowledge of the conditions of the game structure and physical place which shape his activity while he is in that place. It is almost too obvious to point out that to learn about the game you must watch the whole field, but that is how our minds work to understand everything going on at once.

Just as we cannot focus on one form of behavior, we would not come to an empty baseball diamond on a rainy day in order to understand the way in which baseball is played there. A place empty of activity tells us nothing about the people who play there or the rules of the game under which they play. A map of recreation places is just as empty as an unused field.

The study of recreation requires that we examine naturally occurring, unrearranged activities in the places where they occur. Although individual behaviors fluctuate, there is stability in what Barker and others have termed recurring behavioral episodes[2] such as the daily after-school gathering of groups and the character of individual

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[2]Roger Barker, Ecological Psychology (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 15-30.

participation in active games. The common behavior has boundaries of entry and exit points and limits to the participating group size. The place in which a particular form of behavior occurs has more visible, physical boundaries set either by the surroundings or by the customary game rules.

Place-connected forms of recreation occur in units where characteristic behavioral patterns repeatedly occur within defined physical settings. But instead of working with people and place separately, we must capture the two parts together so we may understand them and the relationships between them. After we see the entirety of a baseball game we can examine the separated parts while keeping in mind their connectedness.

2. The Use of the Behavior Setting

The basis of my effort to describe a workable method for approaching recreation is the concept developed by Roger Barker in his book Ecological Psychology of the "behavior setting." In his psychological field work he found that physical settings influenced behavior in different ways. Barker did not impose a means of study but rather recognized "out in the streets" the many situations like classrooms, stores, and churches whose internal structures affect the behaviors which take place there.

The unit of study is a difficult one because it combines two parts with very different characteristics. Yet the behavior setting is necessary if we are to maintain

the connectedness of behavior and place in analysis. One large problem with the concept is that our language keeps the two parts separate: we have names for physical places--houses, classrooms, stores-- and for the activity which occurs there--living, learning, shopping. There is seldom a terminology that supports a bringing together of the two parts.

In recreation there <u>are</u> named, specific forms parallel to the concept of the behavior setting. In usage the names suggest a type of place, a set of rules, and a common form of human activity. I call this specialized behavior setting a "recreation setting." Listed below are some of the forms I am thinking about when I speak of active, outdoor, place-connected forms of recreation. On one hand I hesitate to make a list because it suggests that these are the only proper forms, that all recreation is as formal as the activities with which we are commonly acquainted, or most importantly that I am addressing this work only to these stereotyped sports. On the other hand, these activities are important because they represent the most widespread teenage participation and are currently the most familiar recreation activities in our society which are active and place-connected.

hardball	basketball
softball	tennis
football	volleyball
soccer	badminton
lacrosse	handball
field hockey	sledding
golf	skiing

swimming	track running
water polo	field events
boating	cross-country skiing
sailing	roller-skating
ice hockey	walking
skating	bicycling

I will discuss the similar qualities of the places and behavior patterns found in these recreation settings in two later sections, and I will argue that the two-part behavior setting is not completely adequate to describe the activities listed above. There is a third variable in recreation settings which influences, and is influenced by, the physical place and the patterns of activity.

3. The Recreation Setting and Its Context

It is important to emphasize that the recreation setting is a construct, an arbitrary establishment of boundaries around places and behaviors. For this reason, if we in looking at a baseball field spend our efforts deciding the exact distances of boundaries somewhere outside the backstop and outfield, we will lose sight of the more important issue of observing concentrations of connectedness between the place and the participants.

Earlier work in playground design, especially the adventure playgrounds and Friedberg's concept of "interplay,"[3] recognized the affective relationship between place and activity and the fact that both parts are alterable. The relation between parts is critical to the functional success of a setting. Success must occur at two levels: at

[3] M. Paul Friedberg, Play and Interplay (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970).

a perceptual level when a person considers how a physical form might support a desired activity, and at an experiential level when the actual fit between forms is tested. Congruence in form is easier to photograph than to predict, but the issue of determining match or mismatch in recreation places is central to the analysis of success or failure. Location, configuration, and control over a recreation facility all affect the fit with teenage life patterns.

In speaking about the boundaried setting, full understanding requires more than observation of the single points of contact--the momentary behavior, the small area--which compose a setting. Each of these has complete continuity with a larger context of the physical city and the complete lives of teenagers taking part. The context of city conditions influences all the recreation settings it surrounds. To describe the entire context of a basketball game is impossible; but the act of establishing boundaries around the setting gives a two-sided situation--inside and outside, setting and context. We then can talk about the fit between context and setting along that boundary interface. If we do not understand all surrounding issues we can at least include the closest and most important ones.

Now we can at least frame the variety of forms of hockey which were illustrated. If we see hockey at each level as recurring, stable behavior patterns in boundaried places, they become comparable. The next task is to investigate in more detail the general characteristics of the

places and behaviors which make up the settings.

4. The Recreation Setting: The Physical Place

We are quite familiar with the form of the facilities and surfaces such as fields, courts, and rinks required by place-connected recreation activities, so these will not be described in great detail here. Places for recreation are most clearly defined when they are enclosed, either by their formal boundary lines or by surrounding fences, houses or streets. Where the activity involves longer circuits of motion, the physical setting may have an extended form, like a path for walking, running, or bicycling. To be considered as part of the physical component are the nets, hoops, backstops, and other accessory equipment. This might range in complexity from a pair of sneakers for running to a million-dollar ice rink facility for the 220'x85' game of hockey.

Associated with the physical part of a recreation setting are the supporting services of maintenance to guarantee the usability of the place and security measures to protect the facility from damage or misuse.

5. The Recreation Setting: Behavioral Characteristics

In recreation activities three levels of behavior are important: the behavior of the individual, relationships among people involved in activity, and the broader life-patterns of the people who come together for recreation.

At the individual level behavior shows itself to have stages of involvement, learning, practice, and competition. Initially the person must have a desire to engage in the activity, perhaps for the challenge, the variety, or the chance to develop and demonstrate personal abilities. At the next stage the person joins a team or makes an effort to learn the fundamental rules and necessary basic skills. In most sports and for most people practice is necessary and is self-motivated to bring a person to a desired level of competence, either for self-satisfaction or to be applied in competition. More serious training can also occur, described by my coach as "training the mind to make tremendous demands on the body . . . placing the point at which you will quit farther and farther away."

Personal characteristics may set limits on the form of individual behavior. Individual physical capabilities and limits of time and range of movement are factors which may dictate the degree of participation. A person's activity may also be impeded by his ability to recognize all the activities in which he might possibly engage. A person or group most often designs the expenditure of free time through personal creativities. The question "What shall we do?" is frequently asked, and too often teenagers do not do well in answering it for themselves.

Recreation places often support relations among people which may differ in the various stages of learning, practice, and competition. When a team structure is present,

the team members work together with each other in order to work against a competing team. Individuals may compete against each other in sports like tennis or may merely participate together in non-competitive activities like jogging. To be recognized also are the characteristic relations between participants and supervisory persons or observers interested in the recreation bu unable or uninvited to play, as in the picture below.

Players and onlookers are all participants in this schoolyard stickball game at JFK elementary in Jamaica Plain.

5

The behaviors exhibited in specific recreation activities are part of the life activity of the participants and may be shaped by social forces present in a grouping of people. I have observed two aspects of teenage behavior which seem to have special prominence. First is a strong individual sensitivity to peer-group attitudes about acceptable forms of behavior. Such pressures often govern personal ideas about the propriety of physical exertion by girls, about authority figures, about the need to Be Cool--

to show contempt for becoming part of structured activities initiated and controlled by anyone else, such as the Boy Scouts, school sports programs and city athletic leagues. A second general pattern concerns the teenage propensity to construct separations and rivalries, an action probably stemming from commonly felt needs to establish and reinforce personal identities. Separation occur between carefully drawn group memberships, between neighborhoods or even city blocks, between age groups and between themselves and the established authorities of schools, government, police, or any other person who would assert authority over them.

6. The Recreation Setting: The Framework of Rules and Aids to Development

Behavioral and physical characteristics are well established as variables within behavior settings, but in activities like baseball or basketball there are particular sets of rules which strongly govern the physical form and individual or team behavior patterns. Barker saw the influence of rules in behavior settings when he wrote that "It is the rules of the game, and the arrangement of things and people according to the rules, which constitute the essential, unitary ecological environment of the players; it is these that shape the life-space of each player."[4] However, Barker saw the rules or format for conduct not as a variable in the behavior setting, but as an outside influence. This is sim-

[4]Barker, Ecological Psychology, p. 9.

ilar to an earlier time when physical place was considered to be unchangable in its relationship to behavior, as noted by Michelson when he wrote: "Space has been utilized as a medium in most of human ecology rather than as a variable with a potential effect of its own."[5]

Since then we have come to see that the part of the physical environment within a setting is not necessarily an unchangable influence on behavior. Similarly, the format of an activity as expressed in rules and supervisory policies of how participants should act is equally as alterable, and the change can have direct consequences on the behavioral and physical aspects. Therefore, the concept of the recreation setting, in all other ways parallel to the behavior setting, is not complete unless we include in it the customary rules and organization of the activity.

Evidence of Rule Structures

I first began to see this additional dimension to recreation activities in the various activities taking place in the Kelly ice rink in Jamaica Plain. Teenagers there participate in ice hockey, figure skating instruction, and open skating in the same physical setting, but the three activities could not be more different in intensity, competitiveness, and personal requirements. There are rules to govern the conduct of hockey although as seen in the early

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[5]William Michelson, Man and His Urban Environment: A Sociological Approach (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1970), p. 17.

examples the forms of play can be very different indeed. In the figure skating class pictured below I saw as similar to game rules the presence of an instructor who imparted to the skaters a particular orientation and conduct and who directed a process of learning matched by personal objectives of skill development and achievement. The rules and supervision appeared to have primary impact on the form of the skating class and hockey game as recreation settings. Completely peripheral to the nature of those recreation settings were the maintenance and security parts of the rink management, parts which are usually most prominent in recreation planning.

Metropolitan Figure Skating School class at Kelly rink, Jamaica Plain.

6

I began to understand then that these place-connected ice rink activities of figure skating and hockey were also rules-connected: that is, an established procedure for participation represented by accepted rules or direct leadership affected both the characteristics of the

physical area and the forms of behavior appropriate to the place. Within the accepted format for playing hockey, assistance to the process of development was also evident in the coaching programs which led skaters through a sequence of learning: initial contact with the sport, learning of the rule system, instruction of skills and team coaching, and finally formal competition. In contrast, open skating represents a type of recreation setting which has less of a prescribed format beyond basic skills; in this case development to achieve desired abilities must be self-formulated and conducted.

The word "conduct" means literally to "convey in a channel," and this definition provides us with some valuable insight. The "channel" is the way in which the activity has been given defining rules of game area, time limits or proper procedures like passing and offsides in hockey. In figure skating the objectives are a special set of spins, jumps, and turns to be learned. Within the format, persons serving as instructors try to "convey" participants from first exposure to the development of their full potential.

The conduct of a recreation activity, then, contains two parts: first, the format of accepted rules serving as static guides to the manner in which sports are played, and second, supervisory or organizational supports to the process of personal and team skill development within the limits of the rules. The value of rules-connected recreation forms is that in the situation of an eighteen-inch

hoop ten feet off the ground and a ten-inch ball, we can face specific, bounded challenges to our abilities and can work to improve our skills as measured against others and against our own starting levels.

"Football, chess, hockey, soccer--we can at last elect our challenges. Liberated from a world where reward and necessity dictate all activities, we play the games, submitting freely to their aims, their rules, their pace."

Central Park Country

Mozart Playground, Jamaica Plain

The existence of stages within the process of personal development--contact, learning, practice, competition--suggest that the programs of recreation facilities need not completely support the full range of phases of behavior. A beginning skater may be interested only in learning to stand up and make simple turns without regard for the size or quality of the ice. A specialist like an advanced figure skater needs a large, flat, scraped ice surface. However, if single places do not support all the stages of development, there must be a full set of settings and aids to development available to support the process by which people reach the final state of highly developed abilities. A competitive football team cannot be generated

if there is no means by which youth can be engaged in first learning the fundamentals of the game and then practicing them.

Structurization and Openness

In order to understand the objectives of support for teenagers in any single setting, we must review the purpose behind overall programs. In the best sense an educational or recreational program should enable a person to reach attainable horizons, depending on his level of potential. A more common action is to create specific channels for development and impose single paths and paces of advancement, as in recreation departments which sponsor leagues in perhaps three sports--nearly always softball, football, and basketball--and which then make league divisions by player age. Institutional programs seem to be able to manage only recreation forms with solid rule formats, and they seem to requirethe maximum amount of competitive play as the measure of their success.

Inflexible, conventional game rules and established programs to assist personal development do not respond to the unpredictable, changing forms of individual teenage behavior. The sports may look active, but the players are passive: participants do not direct their own behavior but must respond to the place and to the program set before them. Teenagers are supposed to mold themselves to fit the locations of complete facilities and the requirements of equipment,

practice schedules, or the available 10:30 P.M. ice-time at the Boston University Arena.

If we move in the completely opposite direction, seeking total flexibility in recreation programs and facilities, we come to the concept of "open space." Although frequently mishandled, the term open space has been best defined by Kevin Lynch and others as "those regions in the environment which are open to the freely chosen and spontaneous actions of people . . . open to activity, as a sandbank or a grassy slope; or to movement, as a prairie or an unobstructed wood; or to the roving eye, as a vista or the open sky."[6] Open space as land is the "uncommitted complement to the system of committed land uses that make up a city region,"[7] but rules and programs could also be "open" to participant choice. The purpose of open space is to remove physical constraints to people's desired outdoor recreation activities. A channelized, sequential sports program can be just as constraining as is a carefully plotted park area.

From my contact with the recreation habits of inner-city teenagers in Jamaica Plain, however, it appears that many teenagers are unable to use completely open physical areas or to generate rule systems and group organization themselves. Either they have lost the ability to formulate

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[6]Donald Canty and others, Open Space for Human Needs (Washington, D.C.: The National Urban Coalition, 1965), p. 11.

[7]Ibid.

independent personal activities by which to develop physical skills or express individual creativities, or else open-space planners have deluded themselves that teenagers can invent new uses and bring physical and behavioral structures to an open space. Open space should be available for a choice of uses; far too often the undifferentiated place remains open, and empty, because it provides no support for the kinds of behavior patterns, personal goals, and limited inventiveness which teenagers commonly bring to the place.

Enabling Recreation Frameworks

Between the extremes of complete program structurization and the openness of open space, I believe that to be workable recreation settings must have flexible formats of rules and sequences of assistance to development. These would enable people to recreate but would not dominate their individual behavioral preferences. Rules could be posed as frameworks for procedure, adding more detailed requirements as the participants wished to accept them, from the four boys playing a skeletal form of hockey on the pond to the highly structured Youth Hockey League game where each player accepts a specialized position and function.

Recreation places and programs should open up and be available for individually constructed uses, but completely open spaces would require independently invented forms of recreation. We are not ready to make such a jump. Teenagers are bounded both by habit and by the recreation

around them, and conventional sports will continue to be the most publicized and popular types of recreation. Instead of calling for an impossible leap to totally new ways of recreation, we must keep contact with the forms of recrea- popular now. But we can bend those precise rules and expected routes and speeds of development to make familiar recreation forms usable by teenagers in situations where the requirements cannot be met. We could also increase their choice in open places by placing frameworks of nets, boundary lines, poles, and so on together in one place, making, for example, asphalt areas suitable for playing tennis, volleyball, basketball, or other games.

The difference between the presence of rules and development support and completely "open" settings is in the level of support extended to the individual. Perhaps in the future forms of recreation can utilize the conflict between personal desires for recreation and available resources to encourage personal resourcefulness. Right now that gap is insurmountable: kids, like most of us, are not very good at independent organization, design, and construction of place-connected activities beyond the hanging of a basketball hoop in the driveway. There is strong need for supporting structures--rules, organization, leadership--within present-day recreation settings which will not suppress self initiative but rather will enable young people to improve their abilities of self-design by overcoming surmountable obstacles.

II. The Purpose of Teenage Recreation Activity

From a development of an analytical approach we turn now to the refinement of purpose and the development of ways to intervene in and change present conditions if it is necessary to do so.

Recreation in its broadest sense is all the activity in which a person chooses to engage outside necessary or required activities such as school, work, or daily tasks. The most important attribute of recreation is that it is selected, that the person sees some benefit in voluntary participation. The reasons behind the selection may be that activities provide a diversion or contrast to other concerns, that they are non-routine and different in form from other structures in a person's life. As Wurman writes, recreation is an "outlet" or release.[8]

The "re-" prefix of the word reflects that the activity is pursued to re-fresh or re-new, to prepare a person to enter again the other half of his life. However, for the growing child free-time activity does not serve only as light or refreshing activity as it might for pressured adults. Recreation for the child or adolescent is intertwined in the primary development of the individual, both in the process of gaining physical coordination and skills, of de-

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[8]Richard Saul Wurman, Alan Levy and Joel Katz, The Nature of Recreation: A Handbook in Honor of Frederick Law Olmsted (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1972), p. 12.

veloping successful personal behavioral patterns, and of learning the ways of teamwork and competition. From within that development come some of the drives to express in recreational pursuits one's abilities to act upon situations, overcome obstacles, and achieve some level of success.

The recreation which is needed in the lives of youth living in the city is recreation which completely responds to the way those people are and to the environment in which they live. If kids have short periods of free time every afternoon the appropriate recreation is not summer camps or even single city facilities like beaches or fieldhouses. The teenagers of a city are enmeshed in the process of growing up, of finding their position among social patterns, physical environments and systems of authority. Recreation must assist that process in order to build self-development and self-reliance.

In a place where the recreational patterns of a teenage population are established, I propose that the reasons for intervention in the situation are threefold: (1) to provide opportunities for recreation which can accept, focus, and direct teenage involvement in channels beneficial to them individually; (2) to provide a range of choice for recreation within the limits ofpersonal teenage constraints; and (3) to support all stages in the process of personal improvement, including physical development, the ability to deal successfully with social relationships, and the ability to select and direct personal actions.

III. Strategies for Intervention and Change

In the early examples of hockey we saw that participants either used a regular game format or modified some part of the game. If there is an unworkable fit between an activity and a situation, there are two design strategies available: "reconciliation" demonstrates that two forms are only seemingly incompatible, that problems are not actually present and adjustment is not necessary. "Accomodation" is more change-oriented: one or both of the city context and the activity form must be altered to achieve a workable fit between them. A procedure of reconciliation will demonstrate that the conventional form will fit into the context; a procedure of accomodation will act upon the object or its context, either to adapt the form of the activity or to make the conditions of the surroundings adoptable, i.e., more receptive to potential recreation forms. These three strategies will be discussed in the three sections below.

1. Use of Conventional Forms

There are a large number of recreation activities which are conventional in our American culture--those commonly evident in high school, college, and professional athletic programs such as were listed earlier. Several qualities of the word "conventional" suggest their suitability for use in city areas. First, they are customary forms,

inherited from one generation to another. They are, at worst, habitual forms of recreation and have no good reason for use except that they have been traditionally used. However, in another sense we must recognize that conventional activities are vehicles of participation commonly used by a large number of people and have been shaped by a basic congruence with the features of the culture in which they have arisen, ranging from our competitiveness to our climate.

Some conventional forms of recreation have shown themselves to be workable in the city. Basketball is the main attraction, chiefly because it requires simple equipment and a relatively inexpensive ourt. I would argue also that there is a good fit between the fluid behavior patterns of city teenagers and the level of challenge, variable team size and variable court size of the game.

The primary benefit to the use of conventional forms is that they are familiar and of a common form: a person can enter a gym anywhere and immediately join a game of basketball or watch and understand the activity because the game is the same around the country. Similarly, a person can pursue the development of specialized skills in a conventional sport and be confident of finding teams of successive quality acting within the same format with which he is familiar. The basketball courts of the junior high school and the professional team are the same size.

The set of conventional forms of active recreation is fairly small, as seen in the earlier listing, but the

number of activities is not limited: customs accumulate and participation spreads until sports like touch football and box lacrosse, stickball and street hockey gain their own creditability.

Conventional here has been applied to the forms of recreation, but it equally well describes an attitude about the authority structures, physical form, and social relationships in the city: that conditions have formed over time in traditional ways, that conventional ways of living are shared by many people, and that there is basic reason for the fit between urban form and function.

Forms of recreation which we have in our midst today are not inviolable: they can be changed. If an activity or some part of its form does not fit easily into the urban environment we can make a choice either way, to change the conventional conditions of the environment or to change the forms of particular recreation activities. The latter strategy may be easier to accomplish in many cases.

2. Adapting Activity Forms

The strategy of adaptation denies that the conventional configuration of an activity must be accepted. As a process of re-design, adaptation attacks the abrasive characteristics of a recreation form which prevent its use in city areas. The game of hockey, adapted into many new forms in the introductory examples, serves to exemplify the three ways adaptation can occur.

(1) Reduction: Difficult characteristics of a game such as bodily danger, prohibitively expensive personal equipment, or rink size, can be reduced to less expensive or less dangerous forms which better fit participants' incomes and the sizes of convenient sites in the city. The danger in reduction of the unique parts of a sport is that in the service of mass recreation the activity may lose the special flavor that makes the game interesting, challenging, or contrasting to other forms of personal activity.

(2) Substitution: We may substitute into the same physical setting a similar activity structure which does not have the costly or ill-fitting characteristics. In the case of hockey there is nothing else to do on ice except figure skate or go around in circles if hockey is unsuitable; a form of passing game could be adapted to ice, such as lacrosse, to provide an alternative for kids who like to skate and presently have the choice of one game form.

(3) Flexibility: The form of the activity may be made more malleable in the hands of the participants: if a person can find enough people for two full teams and a place which supports regulation procedures, he can use the conventional form, but he can also re-design the game to fit available re-

sources. The game form may be made ready for user manipulation by an explicit design of alternative, compromised forms like four-man hockey, by setting out rules in a hierarchy of basic to optional rules, or by simply removing the image that the conventional form is unchangable.

3. Making the Context Adoptable

The other area for action is upon the context of the recreation form in order to make the conditions more suitable for potential activities. To become adoptable, conditions present in a city could be made large enough to accept any shape of an activity--its cost, team structures, field size. Places could be made flexible to permit the selection of use by removal of barriers which impede entry of a new activity. Finally, a specific context could serve a number of functions by fitting closely with similarly shaped game patterns. For instance, a fence in a field could serve as a baseball or softball backstop and perhaps also as a goal for another field sport.

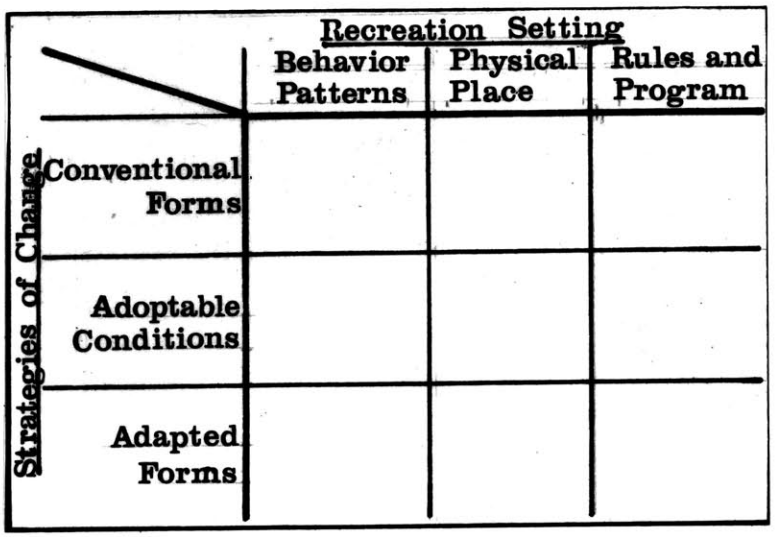
The danger of looseness in context is that it may demand too much structuring by the participant: without a backstop the game form must be altered to stop missed pitches, and that is nearly impossible when there are only two or three players on each side. Some structuring may make potential recreation sites more receptive than completely open areas, whether that structure is the suggestion of possible uses, a recreation program which can be called

upon to referee or instruct, or actual lines or equipment available in the place.

If there are dissatisfactions with the array of opportunities available to a teenage population, three strategies have been proposed: to work with conventional forms; to adapt current, standardized forms; and to make the city context more receptive to recreation uses. No one of the three strategies is entirely appropriate in itself. Changes to increase the receptivity of the city context must be tempered by consideration of both the necessary fit between city form and other urban uses besides recreation and by the amount of leverage required to make contextual changes. Adaptation to fit particular situations compromises the valuable commonality of recreation forms. Design decisions meant to improve unworkable situations must be made case by case to identify the sources of ill fit and to prepare modifications.

4. The Combination of Strategy and Approach

I propose that the two strategies of change outlined above may be brought together with the separation of recreation activities into place, behavior, and rules to form an overall strategy for analysis and design efforts in city recreation. As the following diagram shows, we can bring the strategy of adaptation to bear on the three parts of a recreation setting, or we can work to make the physical context, social context, or outside programs more receptive.



The matrix of approach and design intervention.

8

Unworkable situations may be seen as mismatches between context and setting at the constructed boundaries of each of the three parts, such as between a team size requirement and an area where there are not enough kids to form full-size teams. In such circumstances, or when poor fit exists between available places and normal behavior patterns, modifications at less than an across-the-board scale are possible. The retention of as much conventional form as possible will lessen the impact of abrupt change.

We are familiar by experience with some of the design strategies formed by combining adaptation or increased receptivity with the three parts of a recreation setting and its context. For instance, the adaptation of the physical setting and rules of basketball by removal of exact court boundaries is made to fit every size of driveway in the city, as seen in the picture on the following page. Other design changes are less obvious but very interesting: how could the behavioral context of a recreation

setting be made more adoptable--how might we affect the present pressures to be competitive at all times and thus enable kids to enjoy less competitive activities and recognize all their benefits? Or, keeping the conventional physical setting of a tennis court, how might a program administrator adapt the rules or process of instruction and training to interest younger kids without burdening them with intricate rule structures?

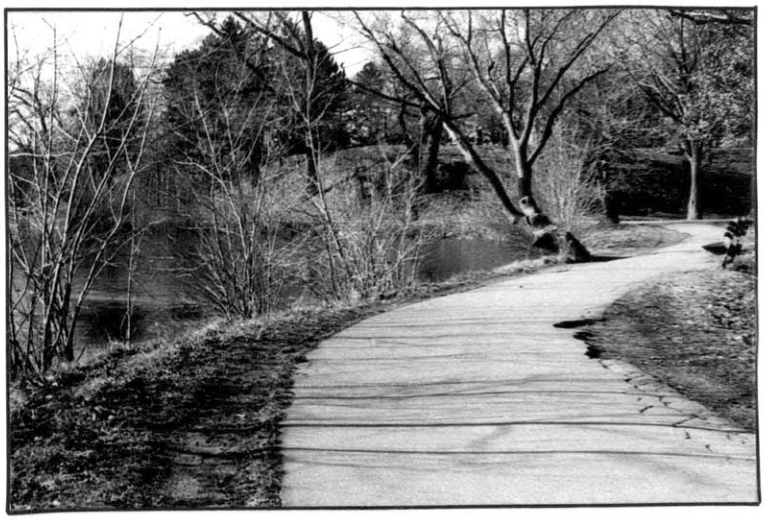
College students play some driveway basketball in front of their fraternity house in Jamaica Plain.

9

This last question suggests that there are many combinations of ways to bring about a better fit among recreation opportunities, the teenage population, and the urban environment. We do not need to work at only one of the three levels of use of conventional forms, adaptation, or provision of adoptable conditions. The first step when suggesting a new recreation setting is to compare: do the intrinsic setting components of behavior, place and rules or supervisory support required fit with the surroundings

and with each other? If they do, conventional forms are probably most appropriate; if not, modification of some part of the traditional form or of the constraining outside conditions is necessary.

With such strategies in hand, we can take advantage of the resources of the city and establish new forms of familiar activities in "non-recreational" city places--



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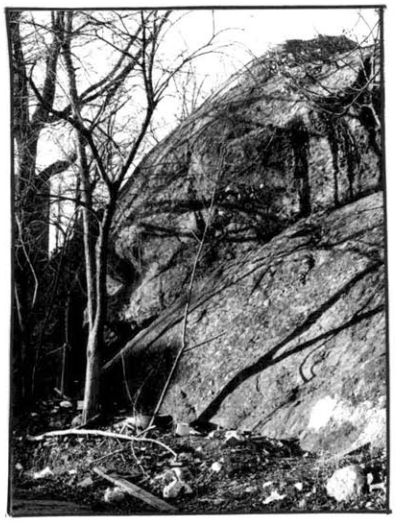

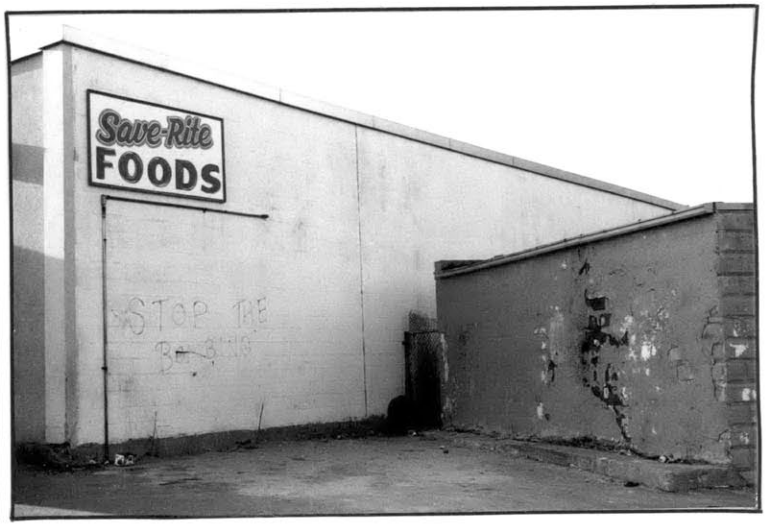

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a path, a sloped street, a rock, a wall and pavement. Conventional sports will not fit, but we can change their forms

and also prepare the presently empty places for new uses.

Finally, a check on the design procedure of making changes in part of a recreation activity is necessary to test the continued interrelatedness of the three parts. After an adjustment the forms of place, rules, and required behavior may not match, either among themselves or with their larger contextual systems. For example, decreasing the size of a hockey rink will require that the rules about team size be adjusted, and a smaller team will have to assume a positioning of players different from the regular six-player team.

PART TWO

EXPANDING INTO ACTION: MODIFICATION OF THE USUAL FORMS OF RECREATION AND URBAN SURROUNDINGS

The purpose of the analysis in the first half of this paper was to consolidate a perspective of the problems of recreation in city environments and to construct strategies to deal with those problems. From this point the approach must be extended in two ways: first, to test the process by connecting the proposed strategy to actual city conditions, and second, to give more detailed ideas about possible changes in the form of conventional recreation activities and in the conditions of city places, social patterns, and authority to make them more receptive to recreation activity.

The expanded description of the Jamaica Plain area in the next section will provide information about typical urban conditions affecting teenage involvement in recreation. Then in the second section I will set out a series of recommendations to improve the fit between recreation forms and the characteristics of teenage life-styles as influenced by the city environment. In the final section a casting out of some ideas about adaptations to some familiar grass- and hard-surface sports will illustrate how we

might begin to treat such standard forms in design efforts to use them in the city.

I. The City as Context for Recreation: Jamaica Plain as Example

This section sets out the major characteristics of the city environment of the Jamaica Plain area which shape the context for teenage involvement in recreation. The information was accumulated by observation and by interviews with the people listed in "Personal Sources." Consistent with the separation of the recreation setting into place, behavior and rules, I have divided the description of the area into three parts: the physical context, the behavioral context, and the context of authority and recreation program structures.

1. The Physical Context: What Does the City Look Like?

Five elements of the physical configuration of Jamaica Plain are important to teenage recreation patterns: the street network and patterns of pedestrian movement, the location and condition of major residential areas, the surrounding parklands and facilities in them, the location of recreation facilities within the residential areas, and the location and amount of vacant land. Descriptions and locating maps are contained in the next five short sections.

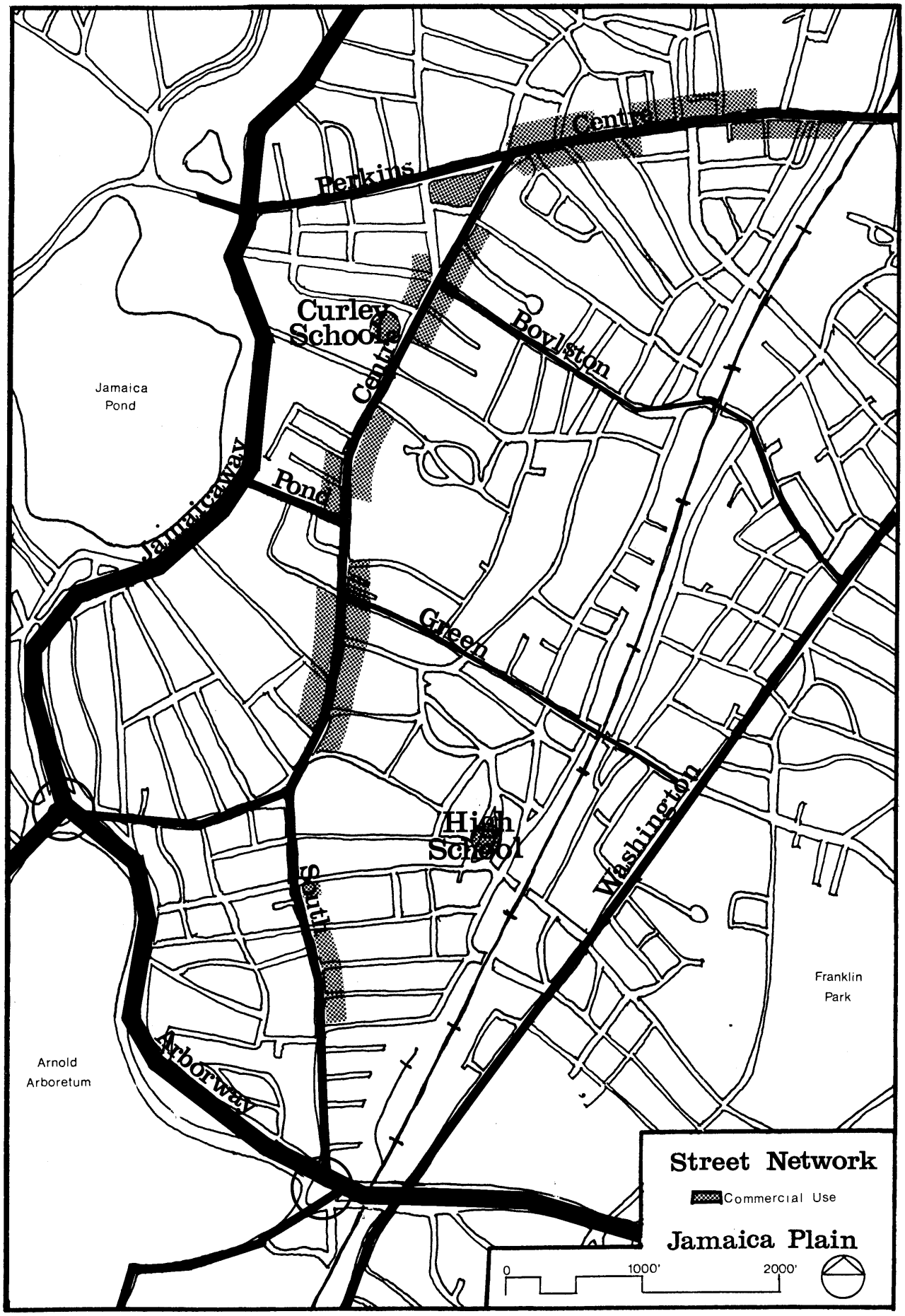
A. Street Networks and Pedestrian Movement

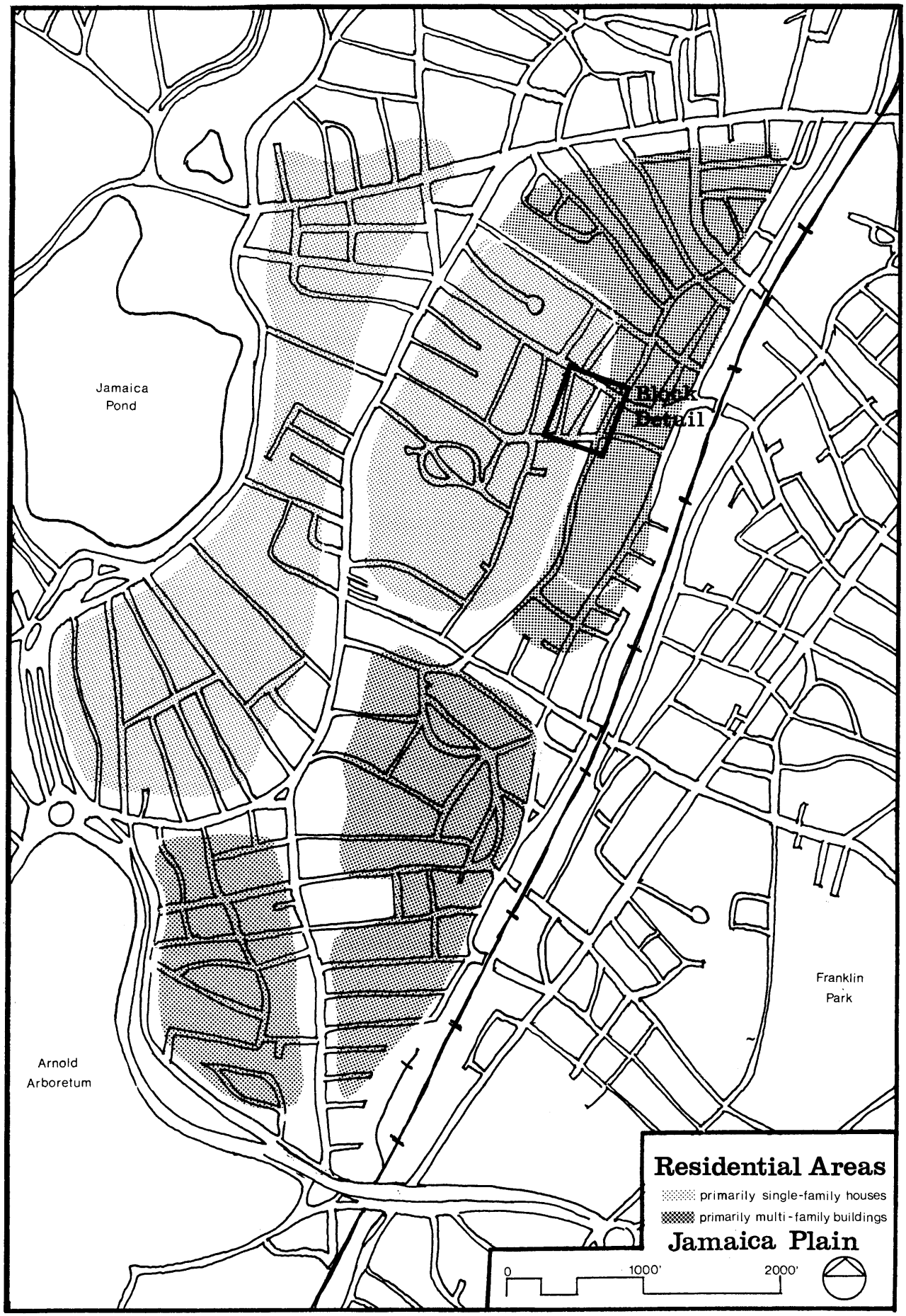
Pedestrian paths are important because walking is a primary means of transportation for teenagers in Jamaica Plain, especially in travel to and from the middle and high schools. Pedestrians experience many barriers to movement, including the railroad, heavily used streets, and actual distances between destinations in this moderately dense area. The street patterns wink around some small hills in the central part of the study area, often increasing walking distances. Teenagers also use bicycles to a great extent although places like Curtis Hall Recreation Center and Kelly rink provide no bike racks. The Jamaicaway-Arborway and Arborway-Washington Street intersections inhibit pedestrian and bicycling movement from park to park.

The street network of Jamaica Plain and relative volumes of traffic are shown on the following map. A streetcar track runs along Centre and South Streets and adds to the congestion in the medium-size commercial area along Centre Street. To the west, the dense and fast-moving traffic on the Jamaicaway and the Arborway make pedestrian crossing difficult and dangerous except at about four signals over the entire length of those two streets.

B. Contiguous Residential Areas

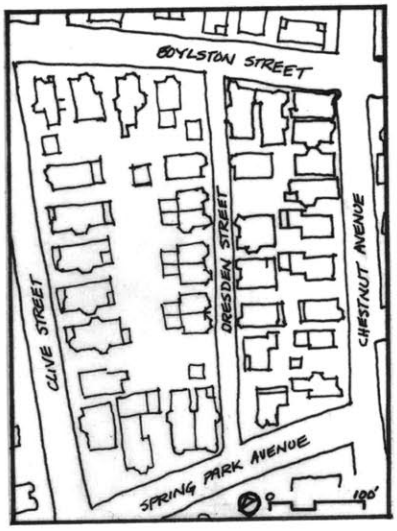
Most of the land between the major street corridors is in residential use although the densities of housing range from blocks of single-family units with yards to blocks


Perkins
Curley School
Boylston
Jamaica Pond
Pond
Jamaicaway
Green
High School
Washington
South
Franklin Park
Arnold Arboretum
Arborway
Street Network
Commercial Use
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'


Jamaica
Pond
Block
Detail
Franklin
Park
Arnold
Arboretum
Residential Areas
primarily single-family houses
primarily multi-family buildings
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'

with three- and four-family buildings on minimal lots. Some multi-story buildings are present in the area along Pond, Centre, and South Streets. The width of streets and sidewalks in residential sections vary as much as the housing densities. There are no industries located in this area of Jamaica Plain and there is little public or institutional land use other than schools and churches.

Shown below are a picture of one of the quiet residential streets in the northern part of the area and a detailed map of two small blocks. These blocks present an idea of typical housing densities and the lack of extensive



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private yards. There are 89 housing units on about four acres of land, six units of which are in single-family buildings and 83 in multi-family buildings. In 1970 there were 295 people living in these two blocks, 76 of whom were under eighteen years of age.

Although about 80% of the houses in the general

area were built before 1940, the residential areas appear to be solid and stable. There are few vacant lots and almost no abandoned buildings except near the railroad track. Admittedly the stability and solidarity are fragile, for the working-class residents often face the constant deterioration of the old, wooden-frame housing stock without adequate resources for proper maintenance.

C. Surrounding Park Areas

Jamaica Plain is immediately adjacent to more acreage of regional park than is any other section of Boston. I initially chose to observe recreation there because I hypothesized that teenagers there would have extensive, well-developed recreation habits. Through the course of my study I found that, in sharp contrast, these park areas are outside the range of usual teenage movement and enter very little into their daily recreation patterns. Frequently the parks are not used at all.

Although the parks to the west appear adjacent to the residential areas, only in a few places is the barrier of expressway-volumes of traffic broken by crosswalks. To the east, Franklin Park is located on higher ground beyond the railroad and industrial area around Washington Street, and there are no distinct, easy connections cutting across these barriers.

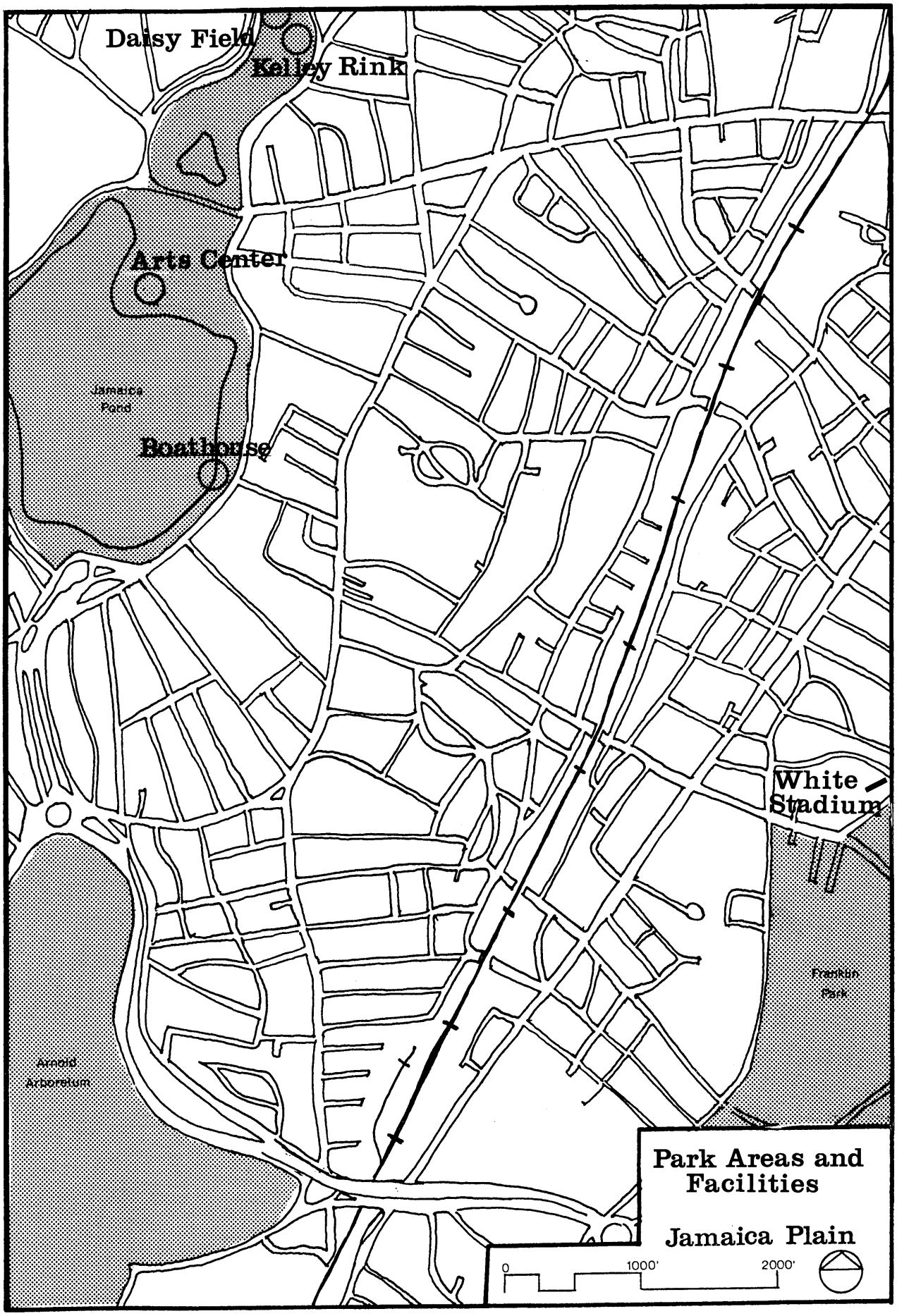
A second reason for non-use of the parks, and not so obvious, is the fact that these parks have limited

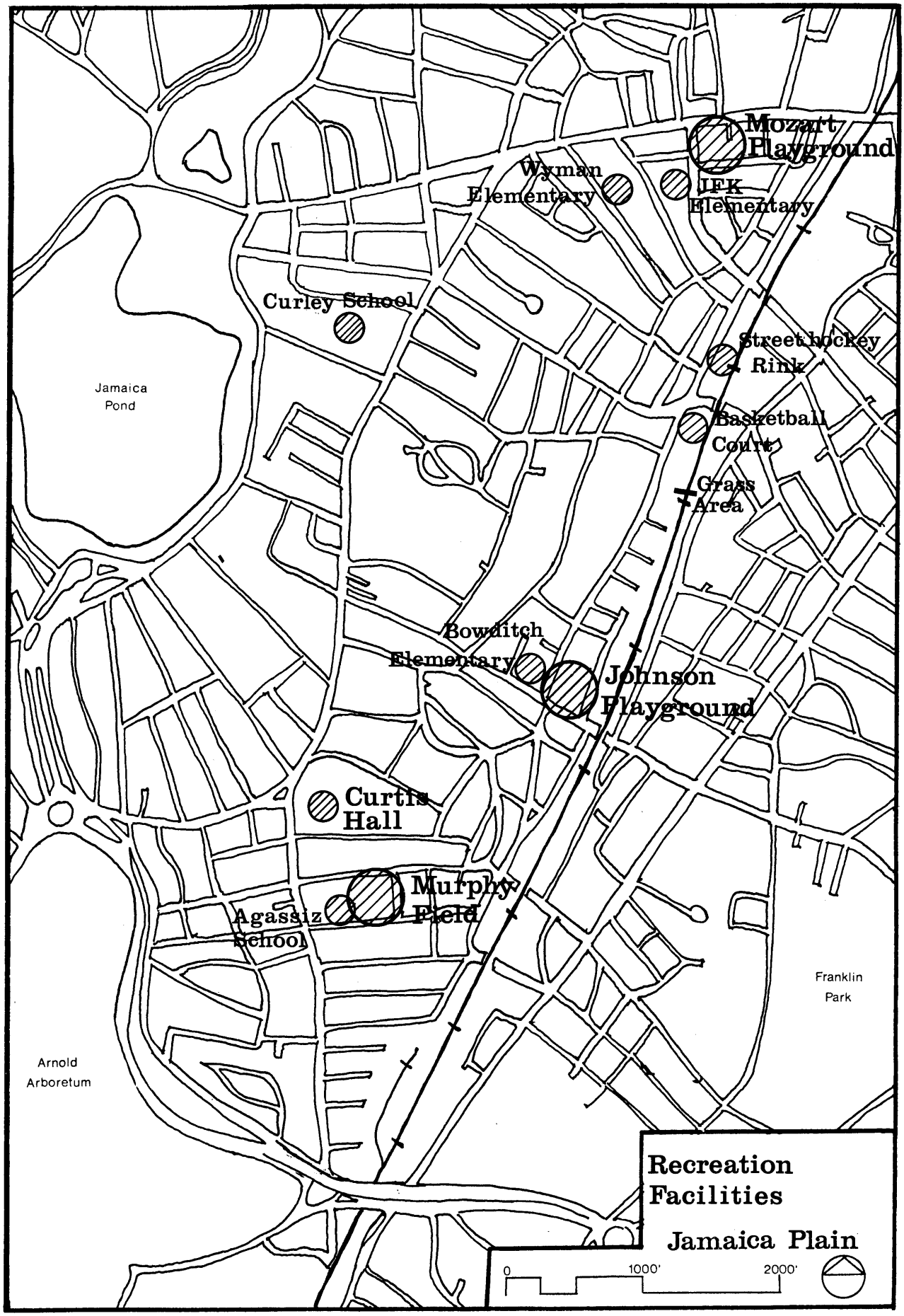
attractive-ness for teenage use. The Arboretum staff conducts educational classes periodically, but rules prohibit any activity in the 223-acre area except walking and plant study. The area around Jamaica Pond contains Kelly ice rink, Pinebank Arts Center, and Daisy Field where the Boston Parks and Recreation Department has recently constructed four

Entrance gates, Arnold Arboretum.

16

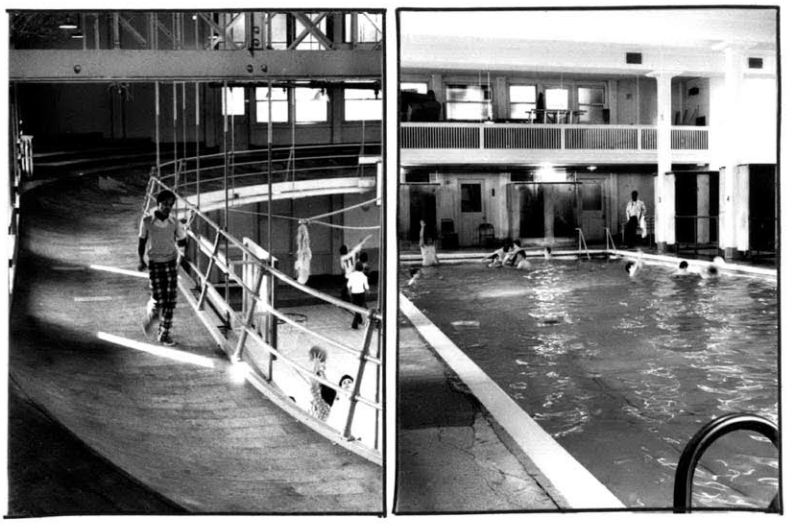
lighted softball diamonds. Within the 429 acres of Franklin Park are located an eighteen-hole public golf course, a cross-country running circuit, White Stadium which is used for most public school football games, two tennis courts, picnic grounds, an artificial pond, and a small zoo currently being considered for rehabilitation. A generous opportunity for regional recreation, yes; but the form of the "emerald necklace" of Boston's parks poorly matches the daily teenage recreation patterns which are clearly centered within the residential areas.


Daisy Field
Kelley Rink
Arts Center
Jamaica Pond
Boathouse
White Stadium
Franklin Park
Arnold Arboretum
Park Areas and Facilities
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'


Mozart Playground
Wyman Elementary
JFK Elementary
Curley School
Street hockey Rink
Jamaica Pond
Basketball Court
Grass Area
Bowditch Elementary
Johnson Playground
Curtis Hall
Murphy Field
Agassiz School
Franklin Park
Arnold Arboretum
Recreation Facilities
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'

D. Recreation Facilities Within the Area

The primary facility in this area of Jamaica Plain is the Parks Department recreation center at Curtis Hall, which in three stories contains a swimming pool, gymnasium, small indoor track, and locker and shower area. There are four playground areas in this section of Jamaica Plain: Mozart playground (seen in Figure 7), containing play equipment and a basketball court; Johnson playground, containing two softball fields, a basketball court, and play equipment; Murphy Field, a grass area which can be used for football or divided into four baseball fields; and a small area at Boylston and Lamartine Streets with one basketball court. Three school buildings--Curley School, the High School, and Agassiz Community School--have gymnasiums, and paved outside yards are present at Curley School and three elementary schools. The locations of all these facilities are wound in a maze of historical reasons, and misfits with their surroundings are numerous.



The indoor track and pool of Curtis Hall, Jamaica Plain. One of the oldest municipal buildings in Boston, Curtis is one of the simplest, and one of the best.

17
18

E. Vacant Lands

Important to a consideration of present recreation opportunities and potential new activities is the location of unused land, often the receptor of teenage activity. Vacant lots appear infrequently in the residential areas. A large amount of land along the railroad awaits the proposed transit line and is occasionally used for softball and other field sports. A "temporary" 200'x80' rink for street hockey has been constructed there, sponsored by the Ecumenical Social Action Committee and shown below.

An asphalt and plywood rink built specifically for street hockey in Jamaica Plain.

19

Current state plans call for the construction of a new transit line and arterial street along the present location of the railroad right of way with transit stops at Centre and Green Streets and the Arborway. There will be opportunity in this major development for the community to make the west edge of the new right of way receptive to rec-

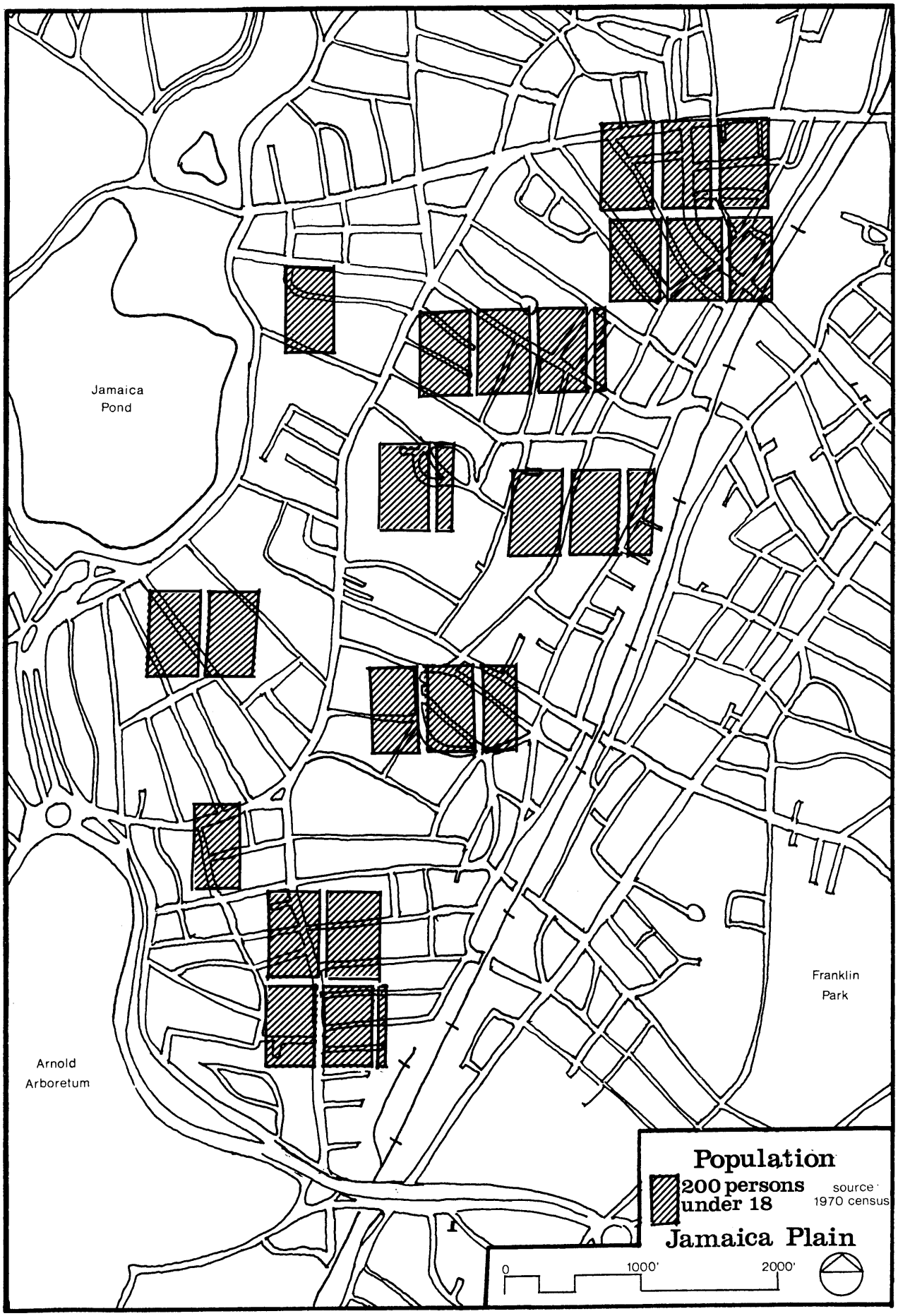
reation uses. The present barriers to walking and bicycle movement at the southern intersection with the Arborway might also be improved.

2. The Behavioral Context: Who Are the People?

To understand the framework of behavioral patterns in the area, it is necessary to examine the overall distribution of people and also the concentrations of activity. Boundaries to those patterns and the general social problems in the area will also be noted.

The map on the next page shows the approximate distribution of children in the area. In 1970 there were 18,500 people living in this area, 4750 of whom were under eighteen years of age. The northeastern part of the area is primarily Puerto Rican, and to the north of Centre Street is the Bromley-Heath housing project of mostly black tenants (not examined in this work). Elsewhere the population is primarily white, Irish-Catholic and working class. The distinctive ethnicity of the area and inherent cultural preferences for recreation should be recognized as a major determinant of the recreation forms observed in the study area and also of what new activities might be successfully introduced.

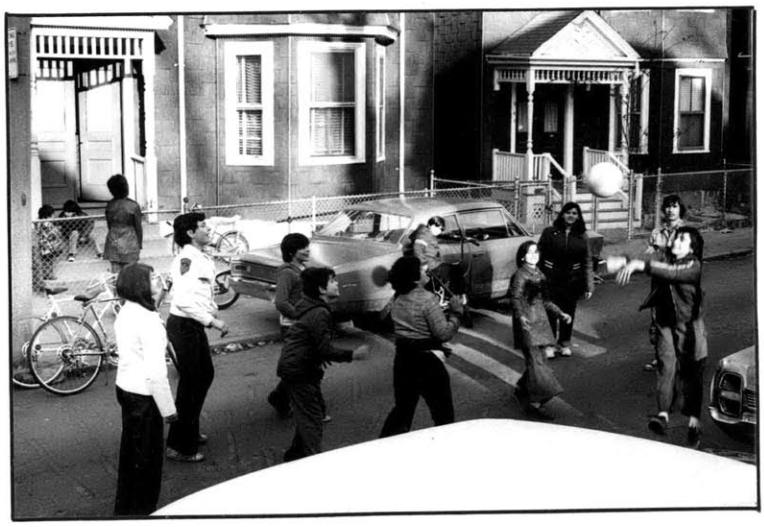
The income range in the area is broad: near Jamaica Pond the houses are some of the finest in Boston, but in other areas income levels combined with large family size create problems severe enough to cause Leo Flynn of Curtis


Jamaica
Pond
Franklin
Park
Arnold
Arboretum
Population
200 persons
under 18
source:
1970 census
Jamaica Plain
0
1000'
2000'

Hall to note: "Several times they're up in the gym in their stocking feet, and they can get hurt. But they'll say their mother is working and their father doesn't live there, and they can't buy sneakers. So when they can't buy sneakers, how can they get involved in any other sports?"

Even though the teenage population is dispersed around the area, concentrations can be noted in their actions and interactions. Schoolyards, streets within residential areas, and some of the central playgrounds and vacant areas are common gathering places for teenagers to play sports or cluster around common interests like working on cars. Mozart playground, with its highly visible location on Centre Street, is a heavily used area for active recreation but also for meeting and onlooking.

The stores along Centre Street attract much activity in the late afternoons because teenage free time is structured by the school schedule. When school lets out at 3:00 in the afternoon, most kids have two or three hours before evening to gather and find something to do. This gathering is spontaneous and without agenda, but it occurs repeatedly. Kids may join and leave a group casually, but the limits of group membership frequently appear to be clearly drawn. These centers of behavioral interaction--reflecting the desire to observe or engage in activity--are not well defined nor permanent, but they can occur only in central places because they must intersect the ranges of individual teenagers. The game of ball-playing in the street



An after-school ball game on Forbes Street, Jamaica Plain.

20

is lively because it arises spontaneously and draws in kids sitting on front stoops and watching from inside the houses. A few people like the lone player in the street hockey rink may choose to investigate activity in fringe areas, but edges and vacant lands do not attract the majority of kids. Occasionally there is a coincidental match between the location of large facilities like the Curtis Hall pool and personal ranges of movement, as Leo Flynn remarked: "See these kids? They're in the pool all the time--but they've got it made: they live on the next street over. Two brothers, about seven sisters, and they live in Curtis Hall. Right next door--beautiful!"

Nevertheless, some existing barriers to engagement and interaction limit the possible extent of personal range and desires to contact other teenagers or authorities. Non-engagement and rejection of conventional behaviors are perhaps tied to the image of self-identity of older teenagers. It seems that younger teenagers are less inhibited and restricted in range by pressure to form small groups, and they are

much more visible in the various programs in the area. Territoriality is manifested physically by barriers to mobility like the railroad embankment, but there is another kind of untouched territory--the unfamiliar terrain of the available, albeit peripheral recreation opportunities like the fine arts program at Pinebank Arts Center which they will not explore.

In a larger sense, these teenagers live in a context of pressures of class and racial conflicts which are city-wide. The many dangers of contact with external values or different kinds of people lead adolescents to adopt a behavioral inertia which resists change and keeps them within safe, established patterns of activities and relationships with other people.

The seriousness of social and behavioral problems in this area must not be passed over lightly. The high school dropout rate is third highest of public schools in Boston. There are widespread rejections of standards of behavior frequently leading to involvement with the police. No one knows the extent of alcohol and drug abuse in the teenage population, but it is suspected to be spread through most of the older teenagers and facilitated by group gatherings in clandestine hangouts. These kids have withdrawn from contact with many parts of current society--certainly the churches, school activities, college education, and, not least, the institutional recreation programs.

Two organizations in the area are trying to break into the severely withdrawn lives of teenagers by means of

recreation programs and thus deter the flow of juveniles into the judicial system, where local recidivism is a severe 70%. The city-wide Youth Activities Commission uses a program of special recreation activities like skiing and back-packing as a tool to make contact with kids and get them out of the city environment. The Ecumenical Social Action Committee works with teenagers within the city context, having formed in the community a number of Teen Centers staffed by part-time personnel. ESAC provides primary support for the annual Youth Week series of activities for area teenagers during the spring week of school vacation.

A 6:00 A.M. start does not dull teen-age enthusiasm about a YAC-sponsored trip out of Boston to the new world of skiing, "where everyone is a starter."

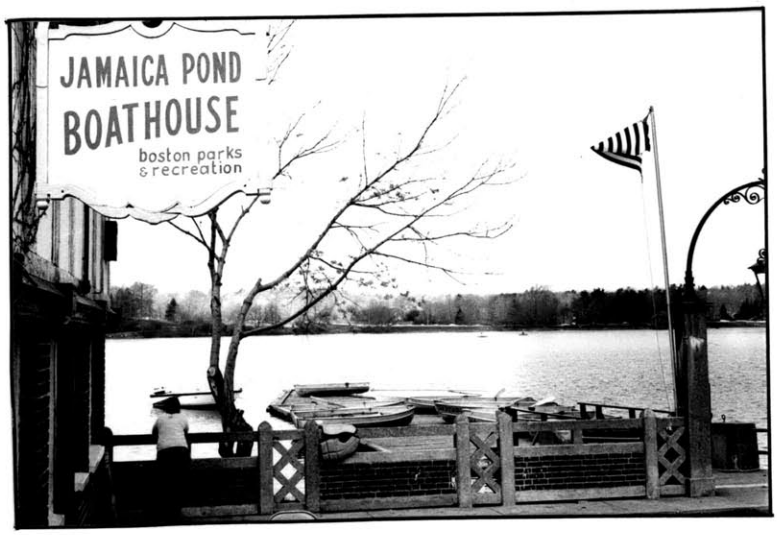
21

3. The Context of Authority and Recreation Programs: Who Directs Teenage Conduct?

Several conventional forms of recreation programs are present in the Jamaica Plain area. The Boston Parks and Recreation Department provides a ten-member staff at Curtis Hall as one of sixteen recreation centers in the city. At

Curtis about six hundred persons use the gym and track area each week, many of them repeatedly, and about three hundred people use the pool each week. A recent addition to the Parks Department's activities in the area is the Pinebank Arts Center which includes programs in ballet, drama, ceramics, art, and music.

The Parks Department conducts city-wide leagues in the sports of football, baseball, softball, basketball, handball, hockey, track, golf, and volleyball and provides supervision on some playgrounds during the summer. A major effort and expense of the department (approximately half of the $7.6 million budget in 1973) is the maintenance of park grounds, especially the sizable Franklin Park. Another responsibility of the park department is the free rowing and sailing program at Jamaica Pond.



Rowboats for public boating, Jamaica Pond.

22

The Metropolitan District Commission provides recreation facilities throughout the Boston metropolitan

area. The M.D.C. operates Kelly rink with about a seven-person staff for five months each year, but it supervises no programs except open skating. Hockey programs of schools, the Parks Department, and independent groups must rent ice-time from the M.D.C. Rental income from the $30 per hour fee does not cover the approximately $3500 weekly operation cost of each rink.

The Boston School Department conducts weekly gym classes in its schools and sponsors interscholastic athletic programs. Students of Jamaica Plain High School participate in most sports, and the basketball team was champion in the Level II division several times. The most recently built elementary schools in Boston are "community schools" and include supervised facilities open to community use in the afternoons and evenings. Unlike most new buildings, Agassiz school in Jamaica Plain does not have an indoor swimming pool, but the indoor gymnasium is open for informal basketball and serves as home court for the high school team because their gym is undersized.

Scattered around the Jamaica Plain area are smaller organizations which sponsor active recreation as part of their program for teenagers, including Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, church youth groups, and a Youth League for boys aged twelve to fifteen which sponsors a hardball league.

The larger forms of authority which shape the general conduct of the teenage population have a subsequent effect on teenage attitudes and involvement in recreation

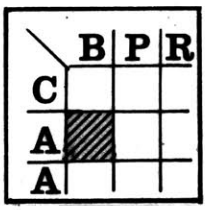
programs. These common authorities include the public schools, family structures, police, and volunteer leadership in community activities. Their character affects the directing of personal development, and although it is difficult to ascertain their full impact, the critically important family guidance in particular appears in many cases to lend little aid to adolescent development, as noted by Bonnie Gorman of ESAC: "It's an area where there are a multiplicity of social problems, where there are large families, where people are having problems just coping with day-to-day life, let alone get involved in their kids' activities . . . We strongly encourage parental participation and the turnout is dismal."

II. Recommended Changes in Context and Setting Components

The purpose of the recommendations outlined below is to describe possible improvement in the form of recreation activities and the receptivity of the urban context by making alterations in the three parts which comprise each of them: (1) behavior patterns, (2) physical settings, and (3) rules and recreation programs. The listing of possible routes of action, although general and hardly complete, makes explicit how modifications might be applied to the parts of every type of recreation setting, whether or not it now exists in the city.

1. Behavior Patterns

Too often behavior is seen as a human characteristic which is unchangable. I believe that behavior modification can occur, both in the context for recreation and the behavioral attitudes during activity. Such change will be difficult and can only happen in small steps brought about by the persons such as parents, educators, and community leaders who can influence normative behavior patterns in city areas.



Behavior Patterns:
Making the Context Adoptable

1. Educate teenagers to the act that recreation is an acceptable and necessary adult activity and in no way is connected to the qualities of childishness surrounding our image of "playgrounds." Also, we must demonstrate that there is no shame in the clumsiness of a human body learning new movements like skiing or ice skating.

2. Provide physical supports for all the behaviors which accompany a recreation setting. Include in game areas like the stickball pavement in Figure 5 sitting places or other socially comfortable corners for spectators or passers-by wishing to watch.

3. Include girls! Attitudes too frequently prevent girls from exhibiting "unlady-like" conduct in active recreation, and such pressures seriously affect young girls

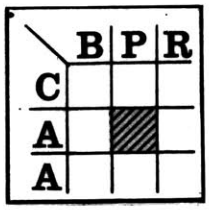
already unsure of proper personal conduct. Publicizing the growing female participation in college programs could support increased teenage participation.

4. Increase the range of movement of city teenagers by improving the conditions affecting walking and bicycling. In Jamaica Plain, walking and cycling paths could connect the residential areas with the peripheral parks. The number of available opportunities for recreation would increase with the radius and area-coverage of familiar personal paths.

5. Move to affect behavior patterns in the early years of adolescence before strong structurizations accumulate or are self-imposed. The staff of ESAC and Curtis Hall commented upon the greater enthusiasm and willingness to try new things of younger kids; perhaps it is best to expose teenagers to many types of activity as early as possible.

6. Prepare teenagers to recognize, accept, and participate in the midst of the variety of behaviors which might appear simultaneously in a central neighborhood park. Diversity is to be expected in public places like Mozart playground in Jamaica Plain. There are often parents with small children, blacks from Bromley-Heath, Spanish-speaking teenagers, and male and female onlookers, all there for a variety of purposes.

in areas like Jamaica Plain where financial resources are limited, where the availability of land is limited, and where clearance to provide fields or facilities would disrupt the functional stability of the city area. However, existing vacant areas could be brought into recreational use, and rights of way could be widened to permit better bicycle movement and more street activity.



Physical Setting:
Making the Context Adoptable

1. Extend the length of time outdoor areas are available for use. The limitations imposed by climate, weather, and darkness could be countered by lighting, protection from wind by careful siting, or by enclosure.

2. Remove interferences to recreation use in potential sites. One example is the hardness of concrete sidewalks and asphalt paths which causes knee injury to runners. Rubberized asphalt could be used on all paths, or

Boston Junior Marathon, May 1975.

a running track could be inlaid along a circuit using existing concrete walks, much like the brick Freedom Trail in downtown Boston.

3. Remove misfits between potential sites and immediate surroundings, such as breakable windows or the possibility of intrusion into private properties.

4. Find complementary recreational uses for physical settings which serve other uses. Teenagers often shape recreation settings around physical settings not intended for their use. Adopting a wall and a fire escape base as hockey goals demonstrates such an adjustment, but the fit between intended use and possible uses need not remain coincidental and unanticipated.

The unexpected use of building exteriors for recreation: hockey players adopt the wall and fire escape of two Jamaica Plain elementary schools.

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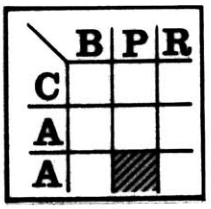
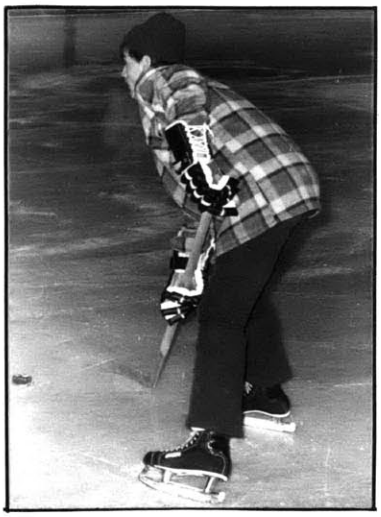


Physical Setting:
Adaptations Within Settings

1. Reduce the size and cost of required spaces and equipment; simplify construction and maintenance requirements. The standard sizes of courts or playing fields can be reduced by changing the form of the activity or in some cases by enclosures of nets or fences. The objectives behind this strategy are to increase the intensity of use, the simplicity of required physical places, and the fit of recreation uses into centrally located sites which are usually smaller than the conventional sizes of settings for sports.

2. Reduce the amount of protective equipment necessary by altering dangerous equipment like hardballs and hockey pucks or rules which permit physical contact.



Differences in ability to pay for protective equipment demand that dangerous aspects of a game be altered when teenagers cannot participate in a "conventional" manner.

27
28

3. Use short, linear forms of physical settings instead of broad, rectangular courts or fields in order to

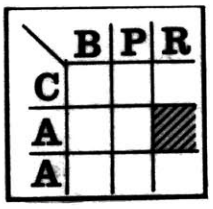
fit into the common configurations of sidewalks, streets, city lots, and vacant land along "edges." The picture below shows how several kids use the length of a street to play "tennis."

Tennis takes a different form: no courts are nearby, so this street becomes the setting for play among several boys.

29

4. Set game boundary lines to fit the available space when as in the example of driveway basketball the area is less than standard size. Many games could be played at a "half-court" size.

3. Rules and Recreation Programs



Rules and Recreation Programs:
Making the Context Adoptable

1. Bring into professionally staffed programs people from the community who have more contact with teenagers in the area. Many programs advance teenagers to a final level of skill like the Senior League of seventeen- and eighteen-

year-olds in the Boston Parks Department. Programs could have an additional objective of turning those "final products" back into the system to become involved as volunteer leaders who are closer to the kids in the neighborhood.

2. Extend teenage involvement in management systems from the passive receipt of instruction to a more positive role in planning, construction of recreation sites, and on-going review of policy and budgeting.

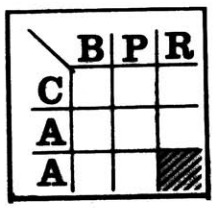
Neighborhood kids put the finishing touches on the new street hockey rink, one of the few times community teenagers have participated in the design and construction of recreation facilities in Jamaica Plain.

30

3. Improve the methods of introducing new game forms and communicating rules and skills. The outdoor posting of rules and simple visual aids might increase teenage familiarity with sports like handball or lacrosse without the expense of personal instruction programs. Outdoor graphics would have several advantages: (1) they could be widely dispersed to existing and adoptable sites; (2) they would be permanent and available for reading at any time; and (3) older or "withdrawn" teenagers could

learn new skills without the necessity of enrolling in a beginners' class at unfamiliar central recreation facilities.

4. Allow easy entry, exit, and re-entry along the route of development in any activity, providing the means but not the imperative to move people from any level of ability to the attainment of high levels of skill. Right now, for example, there is little way to try out hockey without buying all the equipment and finding a team organization renting ice-time. If beginning hockey could be as simple as that played by the two boys on the frozen pond, teenagers could test their compatibility without a large initial commitment or a large personal expense if they drop out. Also, there should be an easy way for older teenagers to come back to a sport and compete against someone other than the "specialists" of similar who has been improving without interruption.



Rules and Recreation Programs:
Adaptations Within Settings

1. Reduce the complexity of activities that must be learned and practiced by forming separate settings to serve each stage of learning, practice and competition; adjust the quality, frequency, and form of assistance to participants in each setting. For instance, there may be practice settings like batting cages close to schools for varsity team training, while a stadium for occasional game competition could be placed farther away and be put under

a different type of supervision. Since many more people test entry than achieve competitive skill levels and since independent practice occurs more frequently than instruction or competition, the number of facilities tailored to each stage of development should reflect the frequency of use.

2. Remove the rules which are difficult to provide for in simplified settings. One example is the set of lines, faceoff circles, goal net, and crease lines required if all the rules of hockey are to be observed. None of these could be provided on a frozen pond surface.

3. Change rules by consensus among players and leaders in response to conditions such as physical constraints or the number of persons present. Rule adaptations might include modifications of team size, team structure, time limits and the need for referees.

III. Illustrative Modifications to Conventional Activities

The preceding section captures little of the dynamic relationship among place, player, and rules in the particular settings with which a designer must deal. In order to demonstrate the next steps of specific design work, I will test some conventional recreational activities against the city context of Jamaica Plain and play out some possible changes, particularly in their physical forms. The two catagories covered briefly here are those activities which take place on grass and asphalt surfaces.

1. Grass Surface Activities

In order to maintain the quality of grass under use of running games, the field size for most grass surface activities must be large. Intensive use on grass will ruin it and turn the field into dirt or mud, depending on the season and the site drainage. There is also a good chance of misfits at the edges of flat fields because walls or fences are not usually constructed to stop stray balls. Grass surfaces are often available in cities but are undifferentiated: that is, they lack the structures which provide orientation and boundaries and the intimacy necessary to support individual behaviors.

These problems underlie the existing conditions in Jamaica Plain, where complete facilities for field sports are provided peripherally in Franklin Park and Olmsted Park and within the area in two block-size play fields. The grass in those two central playgrounds (Murphy and Johnson) is in poor condition due to moderate use, poor maintenance, and poor drainage.

There are three general adaptations possible. One strategy is to take advantage of vacant lands and existing park areas and increase the intensity of their use by removing interferences--trash, curbs, even poorly placed trees--and misfits around the edges. Lack of structure could be countered by outlining permanent game boundary lines and by placement of equipment such as backstops and

goals to orient the activities in the most suitable direction.

Second, field sports could be changed to fit whatever size of field is available. For instance, football requires a field 120'x300', but touch football can easity be adapted to smaller or narrower sites. If the available field size is substantially below the conventional size the maximum team size might be set by the level of crowdedness.

Third, following the long-established form of sand-lot baseball, grass sports may be adapted for use on uneven or sloped dirt surfaces with appropriate changes to actions like base sliding or tackling. Maintenance efforts would be needed to remove dangerous obstacles and to provide well-drained, stabilized dirt surfaces.

From this outline of strategies I will look at five common grass-surface activities and list some specific adaptations.

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL To change the form and size of baseball, it would be possible to extend the squareness of the infield to a more linear form fitting the elongate shape of most available city spaces. As with stickball and softball, the equipment may be modified or substituted to reduce the travel distance of the ball and the danger to both players and neighborhood windows. A further reduction in size could be brought about by enclosures of exterior nettings or walls or by playing into the side of a hill. The players could informally modify the rules and procedures to fit such con-

ditions. Simple types of backstops or orientation of the infield to an available wall would assist the conduct of the game, as would indelibly marked bases.

There could be a separation between full-size fields and practice areas such as pitching and batting cages. Locations of instructional facilities could correspond to the centers of instructional programs such as the schools and recreations center buildings. The team structure of softball could become more flexible and move to a form like "scrub" (batting and fielding rotation) or "flies up" when few players are available.

FOOTBALL "Properly" played, football is an expensive sport, both in terms of personal equipment and in the provision of a complete facility including room for spectators. Touch football is the much preferred adaptation because the rules have been changed to reduce the danger to the unprotected, unskilled player. Touch football can adapt itself to any size of area if the size of the team is flexible, and rules like throwing the ball instead of punting it respond to physical constraints. Under small-field conditions football could assume more of the qualities of basketball, with small teams, short passes, and high rates of turnover.

Outside boundary lines are the most important physical support to the game and could easily be established in available areas to make adoptable fields.

SOCCER The simplicity of the soccer field, the rules, and the personal equipment requirements probably contribute to its growing urban popularity, and Jamaica Plain High School plans to field a varsity team for the first time next year. However, the size of the field and the eleven-man team structure do not fit city conditions well. Separation of the competitive physical setting from the places which could support instruction and informal play would make the sport more available to teenagers in Jamaica Plain. Team size could be adjusted to the available space, and the sport could be practiced on hard surfaces or in indoor gyms. The goal could be simplified and made more durable, for example, by ignoring the back netting and placing an inverted "U" of steel pipe of appropriate size (8' high and 24' long, in conventional form) in the ground at either end of available rectangles of space. On large fields goals could be placed on all sides to allow full-field play, half-field play (like half-court basketball), or cross-field play on two smaller areas.

LACROSSE Although lacrosse is not a sport in wide use in cities, its characteristics of a running game could fit successfully into the conditions of the city. The physical contact and necessary protective equipment could be reduced and the field area reduced or dissolved. We might then suddenly have a fast-paced passing game, moving across the sidewalk, onto a front stoop, down the alley, a pass over a parked car and SCORE!

GOLF The sport of golf is probably one of the least appropriate forms of recreation for the city. However, some stages of this "rural" activity can be supported by settings in the city. Enclosed, outdoor driving cages would provide a setting for basic instruction and independent practice. Chipping and putting practice could be equally well served by very small courses containing multiple-approach greens. A teenager wishing to learn to play golf then would not continually return to one course but with increased skill would move from instruction and practice settings to other, higher quality courses.

2. Hard Surface Activities

There are few problems with hard surfaces in city areas except that they are so common. We are taught from childhood that blacktop is not a park, even though it has proven to be very adoptable for recreation uses, as can be seen in the street play so prevalent in all cities. To increase the recreational use of hard surfaces meant for other uses there could be, for instance, recognition that street play should occur to take full advantage of city land resources. Design efforts could match densities and speeds of traffic to appropriate street recreation uses.

Hard surface activities could be made flexible enough to expand or contract to the amount of space available. Supportive equipment could be simplified and made more durable, and boundary lines for different games could be

painted in different colors over the same area of asphalt.

BASKETBALL Although it is a very successful city sport, the standard physical court area could be improved in form and made more useful in dense areas. More intensive use of the area could be achieved by building baskets on the sides and recessing them to permit four half-court games, since basketball always concentrates around the basket and key area. If full space is unavailable, half-size or smaller configurations might be used. Again, the presence of painted boundaries is important regardless of their dimensions.

TENNIS Tennis is a sport increasing in popularity although construction of a court and the necessary fencing is expensive. Simpler forms, taking advantage of walls or other enclosures, along with the provision of more durable nets, would be less expensive and might into existing sites with less disruption.

In another direction, substitution of the smaller sized games of paddle tennis and deck tennis would retain the characteristics of the game but could be more easily provided. Practice areas for tennis could be provided by blank walls with a decent ground surface.

VOLLEYBALL This is usually an indoor sport, but the equipment might be adapted to outside conditions as in the game of newcomb, which uses a wire extended between poles instead of a net. With painted court lines on pavement, poles

could be set permanently. In order to reduce the attractiveness of a permanent wire for other uses, a player could bring a cable and snap it onto the poles, adjust the tautness, play, then detach and take the cable home. This scenario suggests a possible strategy of participant provision of equipment previously considered "permanent."

ROLLER-SKATING I include roller-skating because it represents a set of activities like bicycling and running which

Sidewalk roller-skating in Jamaica Plain. Perhaps the necessary sharing of two pair of skates among four boys puts an extra element of challenge into the sport.

31

have a linear physical form. It is popular with young teenagers in the Jamaica Plain area but the existing obstacles to its use are more barriers than challenges. The composition of hard surfaces like sidewalks must respond to such a use, which demands continuity combined with a little excitement and interest. Its use dies out as children grow older, perhpas because there is no destination to a process of skill development, just as there are seldom destinations to the physical paths.

HANDBALL Although an indoor sport, one-wall handball, using a commonrubber ball, has adapted easily to outdoor conditons in some cities. For the activity to become useful in Jamaica Plain, there would have to be cleanup and painting of lines in adoptable places, matched by efforts to expose teenagers to the game and a program to provide instruction and knowledge of the rules.

STREET HOCKEY I close this short foray into common conventional forms with a description of street hockey for two reasons. First, the sport is <u>already</u> an adaptation of another sport, yet its form remains pliable and ready for further adaptation. Second, in another sense street hockey has a strange creditability: it is known and accepted by the kids who play it, but it is virtually unknown--and if known, considered to be an aberration--by most of the people in the Business of Recreation.

Street hockey evolved out of the mismatch between availability of ice and the desire to play hockey: the street was an acceptable surface, so the skates came off, the puck changed to a ball, the protective pads were discarded, and two garbage cans or whatever was available became the goal net. Wherever the activity occurs, the general rules remain fluid and gain specificity only when they must respond to intruding parked cars or storm sewers. The team structures and competitiveness remain under the control of the players in each situation.

In conclusion, we come back to the place this thesis began, with the existing differences between the levels at which "conventional" sports are played in different situations. It is clear from the widespread popularity of street hockey that the strategies of change presented here are not new. The processes of changing standard forms and using "non-recreational" but acceptable places have been going on in the back lots of cities everywhere. The changes were brought about by resourceful kids or group leaders who came up against problems and "designed" solutions to accomodate incompatible conditions. The changes present themselves in what I see as exciting new forms like street hockey, four-player touch football, even tennis-in-the-middle-of-the-street.

But the changes have been fragments. They have sprung up independently in various places and are not noticed or used for the benefit of others. The problem is that we are only beginning to see what is going on around us in independent design efforts, and we are still groping to put the parts together.

It is time to recognize the value of changing old forms of recreation and acting upon the conditions of the city to bring the two parts together. Recreation programs, so often wrapped up in their own small agendas, have not realized or responded to the occasional side-street changes which potentially could clue us to a new kind of leverage to improve city recreation. The shift to games

and activities of unconventional yet more appropriate form is growing. The small changes have much to say to us if we will stop, and watch, and hope to be surprised.

PERSONAL SOURCES

The following people provided me with information about the recreation programs and social characteristics of the Jamaica Plain area.

Parks and Recreation Department, City of Boston

Lou Antonellis	Central program staff
Louise Kennedy	Central program staff
Arthur Clifford	Director, basketball league program
Leo Flynn	Supervisor, Curtis Hall Recreation Center
Diane Forgione	Director, Pinebank Arts Center
Jack Whalen	Director, Boston Neighborhood Hockey League
Leo Manfriedi	Director, Jamaica Pond boating program

Metropolitan District Commission

James Whalen	Director of Recreation
Robert Freedman	Deputy Director of Recreation
Tom McGeary	Assistant manager, Kelly ice rink

Boston School Department

Thomas Moran	Acting Director of Physical Education
Ed Sprissian	Jamaica Plain High School basketball coach
Don Watson	Teacher, Curley Middle School

Boston Community Schools

Steve Penner	Administrative assistant, central office
Robert Dremule	Administrative Coordinator, Agassiz School

Youth Activities Commission, City of Boston

Richard Williams	Founder and Director, Youth Enrichment Services
Bernie Culonni	Youth Resource Center, Jamaica Plain

Ecumenical Social Action Committee

Bonnie Gorman
Jim Knopf

Boy Scouts of America

Bob Seavey	Boston Council central office

Girl Scouts of America

Mrs. Grace	Jamaica Plain neighborhood chairman

Metropolitan Figure Skating School

Marion Proctor	Founder and director
Donna Rabatsky	Instructor, Kelly rink
Frank Sennett	Director, boys' hockey program, businessmen's softball league

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